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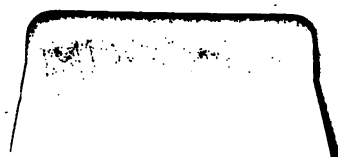
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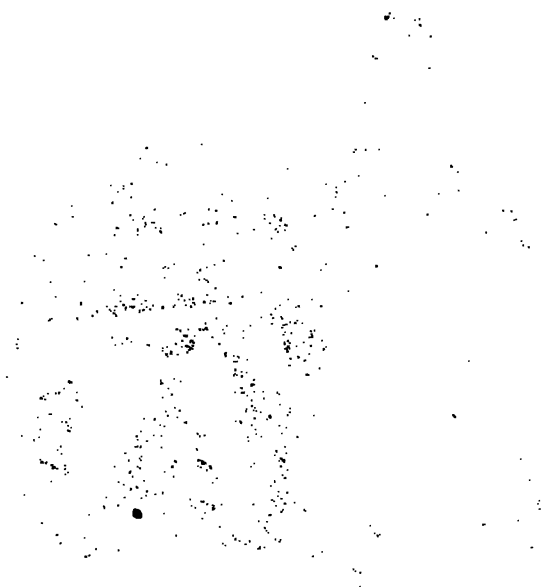
"YOU CAN GO NOW," SHE SAID. HE DID NOT MOVE

Lynn Roby Mockire

With a Frontispiece by Francis



Philadelphia : London
J. B. Lippincott Company
1905



Adam Rush

A NOVEL

by

Lynn Roby Meekins

AUTHOR OF "THE ROBE'S ISLAND WRECK," "SOME
OF OUR PEOPLE," ETC.

With a Frontispiece by Francis Day



Philadelphia & London

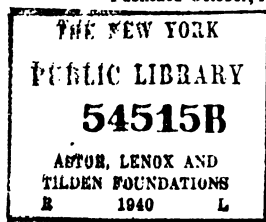
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1903

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TO
L. W. M.

SEP 19 1936

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ADAM RUSH

I

THE TOAST

NO one knows how many times the old middle-aged man had tiptoed to the door and listened in vain. After a while even his carpet slippers grew impatient and flip-flapped so noisily that he kicked them off and crept in his stocking feet. His face looked as though the anxiety of the world had settled there. His hair was uncombed, and seemed to be turning whiter with each hour. He was talking to himself, discussing vain imaginings and devoutly wishing that the strain were over. He had been through war; he had known trouble in its various aspects, but all of it put together was as nothing compared with this uncertainty. So, like the veteran that he was—although his years were less than fifty—he proceeded to fortify his energies with false supports. He went towards the sideboard and was reaching for the decanter, when out of the gloom of the dining-room's corner a voice was heard.

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"Don't do dat, kernel; you'se had enuf."

Colonel Adam Rush looked and saw the white eyes of Ephraim, the household servant.

"You've been watching me?"

"Yaas, sah."

"Who is boss here, you or I?"

"When you is yo'self, sah, you is. When you ain't yo'self, sah, I is. But 'deed, kernel, you mus'n't take any mo'. Think what's a-happinin'. Ob course, it's hard a-waitin', and I'se most shook to pieces myself, but dat stuff won't help."

Colonel Rush laughed nervously, but let the bottle alone and started again for the door, when it opened, and out came a big colored woman—Ephraim's wife—who declined to look at either the colonel or Ephraim, or to reply to any of their questions. She had no time for anybody, and her manner told them that they were particularly unnecessary in the crucial moments then passing.

Colonel Rush stretched himself upon the sofa—a sofa which told in its discouraged condition the fortunes of the home, for its haircloth was worn and frayed, its legs were broken and unsteady, and its whole appearance showed that in years long gone it had known better times.

Ephraim passed his hand up and down and across

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his forehead as if he were trying to rub away the nervousness that was upon him.

The ticks of the big tall clock sounded almost like pistol shots. The quiet was overpowering. Suddenly above everything was heard a small, vigorous cry, a new note in an old home, the long-expected music that was to break the monotony of disappointed years.

Colonel Rush jumped up and almost upset the sofa by his awakened vigor. Ephraim quit rubbing his forehead and, clasping his hands together as if in prayer, exclaimed, "Bless de Lawd!"

"Did you hear it?" eagerly exclaimed the colonel.

"It sounded like a voice from de heabenly land," said Ephraim, fervently.

A few minutes later the doctor—a good gray man who knew life better than he did death, and liked it a thousand times more—came forth with dignity and grasped the hand of Colonel Rush, and at the same time patted him proudly upon the shoulder.

"I congratulate you, sir; from the bottom of my heart I congratulate you."

"It is—ah——" The colonel was afraid to say it.

"The handsomest boy I ever saw, as perfect in every respect as any God ever sent. You are a fortunate man, sir, the most fortunate of men."

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Colonel Rush could not help it; he embraced the doctor, exclaiming to Ephraim as he did so:

"Go down into the cellar and bring up that bottle."

The doctor broke from the embraces and returned to the room, and then there was more waiting, but it was different. Before, it was a silence of unuttered anxieties; now the still small voice gave wings to the moments, and the old clock might tick until doomsday for all anybody cared. In fact, they forgot that the clock was ticking.

Ephraim brought the bottle. It was tallish and extremely old-fashioned. Evidently it had come down from former generations. Age had settled upon every detail of its exterior, and Ephraim had had enough reverence not to disturb the sacred dust that had gathered upon it. When commanded to remove the cork, he did so with pious care, and when at last it was opened the whole room was filled with the aroma. Four glasses were brought, and two of the glasses were filled with water.

Presently the doctor came out again. He had a few minutes to spend with the colonel.

"Doctor Boone," said the colonel, with unrestrained pride, "it has been the custom of the Rushes for hundreds of years to put away a bottle

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of wine to be religiously kept by the succeeding generation until the stork first comes into its home. Then the cork is to be pulled and the health of the new-comer is to be drunk by the physician and the head of the house. I hope, sir, you will now join me in the ceremony, and wish to our son long life and happiness."

Doctor Boone looked at the colonel keenly, taking in every word he uttered. While speaking the colonel had filled the wine-glasses to the brim, but, apparently without noticing what he was doing, the doctor took the glass of water and raised it.

"Here, colonel, is to the young man. May no transgression of the body injure the mind; may no error of the mind harm the soul!"

, "A rather queer toast, doctor."

"It is one of my oldest. And now let us drink."

"But that is the water you have."

"Why, so it is; and it's bad luck to mix liquids in toasts, isn't it?"

Colonel Rush looked at the doctor intently, and the meaning dawned upon him. He lowered his wine-glass and took up the water.

Then silently, solemnly, the two gray men lifted the glasses of water and drank the toast. With-

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out another word Doctor Boone returned to the room.

“Eph, pour it all back and cork up the bottle. It may be sinful, but it’s too good to waste,” said the colonel, sadly.

II

A SMILE IN THE CHURCH

YOU may know all about maps and still be ignorant of Wheatley. But that shows nothing. The most learned men have sought in vain to locate the Garden of Eden, and there are millions of persons from the great centres of population who cannot understand their astonishment when they run across happy people and little paradises tucked away in the neglected corners of the earth, and in the missionary spirit of modern civilization their first concern for them runs in the direction of railroads, improved plumbing, and summer hotels.

Wheatley had none of these. It was scarcely a village. At the meeting of two gentle valleys there was a crossing of roads, and from this central point farm-houses radiated. The hills had started upward ambitiously enough, but at a hundred feet or so they had appreciated their usefulness to the world and had spread out their destiny as fertile fields. There was just the roll to the country to give it a delectable diversity and to afford the slopes and the oppor-

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tunities for the abundant streams that brought to the crops their drink and then lost their sparkling innocence miles away in the depths of the muddy and marsh-bound river.

In a larger way Wheatley was a political division of Washington County, covering that precinct which included the extreme southeastern section, only in this State there was another word—one from England—to represent the district, and the full name for the division was Wheatley Hundred. It was the largest in area and the smallest in votes, and the village of Wheatley rested almost at its farthest point and lived in peace from the turmoil of politics which centred in the county town of Chester, a good twenty miles away.

In the first half of the century, when the horses were not of iron and the wagons did not run on rails, Wheatley found a fine prosperity in its crops and lived its quiet life amidst contentment. Its people were English and Scotch, with strains of Irish, and the intermarriages had brought new generations of strong, serious, and faithful men and women, patriots to the core and workers in the vineyard. So, after the long peace, when the war with Mexico offered an opportunity, a dozen young men went into the service of their country. Few

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of them returned, but first in fame in the number was Adam Rush, who enlisted as a private, fought his way to a lieutenancy, and in the course of time came to be called colonel, because the people of Wheatley would have it that way, whether the War Department liked it or not. Several wounds and much exposure had injured his health, but he was nursed back to strength, and his marriage to Lucy Dean was an occasion for all the country around.

Not long after this marriage strange men with surveying instruments appeared. They were after the most available route through Wheatley, and their coming was not agreeable to the farmers, who had read of the destruction wrought by the engines and trains in other parts of the land. Slowly but surely the wrath gathered. Their peace was to be disturbed, their homes invaded, their stock slaughtered, their sky clouded by the iron monsters that breathed black smoke and murdered man and beast.

Then they arose, and a body of them, marshalled by Jonas Wright, a stern man made more stubborn by rheumatism, marched up to the home of Adam Rush and invited him to lead their forces against the foe. He listened courteously to their outbursts, and gave them this reply :

“ My friends, you have spoken kindly about my

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simple services as a soldier, and have promoted me in your esteem far beyond the value of anything I did. It would be the greatest happiness in the world to lead you against any undertaking that threatened or imperilled your lives or the interests of us all. But, my friends, I think you mistake yourselves in this thing. If we should fight a few surveyors we could whip them handily enough; we might go out and oppose a good sized army; but there is one force that no set of men can successfully resist, and that is the march of human progress. I want to be candid with you, and from what I have seen and read it is my belief that the railroad would be the greatest benefit that could come to us."

They could not easily understand that it was their hero and friend who was speaking to them. For a moment no one replied, but presently Jonas Wright reached for his hat and arose.

"Well, colonel," he said, "we never expected anything like that. We counted you as one of us."

Adam Rush flushed a bit, but smiled as he said, "We all have a right to our opinions. I have given you an honest answer."

But the incident hurt. As the men went down

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the path, Jonas Wright, to whom a railroad was the devil's invention, took it especially hard. "This is what comes from a feller getting too far away from home," he said.

In a way the colonel's declination fanned the opposition into greater earnestness. For the time he suffered in popularity, and the peculiar fame he enjoyed as the hero of the district began to show flaws in the estimation of those who had hitherto seen only shining marks. But he was a man of such geniality, and he was so free from small resentments and so fond of the sunshine of life and the pleasures of conversation, that they, in a measure, forgave him; yet their hero was not the same, and with many the marble began to look like common clay, out of which all were made and to the dust of which all would return.

After the surveyors left the opposition slumbered a bit, but in the sleep kept one ear open, so that every rumor of their reappearance brought a prompt awakening. But the rumors came so often without the surveyors that Wheatley settled down, and the next incident that aroused its interest was the purchase of the Hill farm about two miles above the cross-roads by a stranger, David Bradson, a large, quiet, impressive stranger, who had small

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eyes that shone brightly. With him was his wife, who was an invalid, and an infant son. On the farm was the largest and handsomest residence of the district. Mr. Bradson seemed to have plenty of money, but made no show of it beyond spending liberal sums upon improvements. One day he and Adam Rush met in the road. Each eyed the other intently for a moment, then gravely bowed and passed on. In the sudden and unexpected recognition there seemed to be a mystery, but they kept their thoughts to themselves.

With the farmers Mr. Bradson became respected almost to the point of popularity, and when his wife died his offer to build a church in her memory elicited general and genuine appreciation. Wheatley had done its occasional public worshipping in the school-house, and had performed the rest of its religious duty in Bible-reading at home and family prayers; it was a great place for family prayers—they had them even on election day.

After the church was finished and Mr. Bradson had found his way deeper into the hearts of the district, he began to talk railroad, but it must be confessed that he grievously underestimated the mental acuteness of the Wheatley people. Certainly he did not fully realize the tenacity of a healthy ad-

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mixture of English, Scotch, and Irish in a matter that touched their property and their ideas of personal safety. He did well and he did his best, but he saw how the land lay, and it was before the day when railroad corporations ran rough-shod over courts and communities. So in the end he gave up, and the new line dipped ten miles to the south down another valley, and Wheatley was left to live its own life free from the noise of whistles and doomed to an isolation that meant much for the beauty of nature but little for the prosperity of man. Ten miles across country the little place of Harton grew from a settlement to a town, from a town to a small city, and onward, while Wheatley had its fields and its lonesomeness.

So the church was all that Wheatley secured from its fight against progress.

It was not often that a good preacher came to that remote section, but when he did come he had all the neighborhood for his congregation.

Eight months after the interesting event in the home of the Rushes it was reported around that the bishop was going to hold service. Colonel Rush heard the news from a neighbor, and hurried to his wife. In his progress up the ill-kept lane he did not notice the look of dilapidation that

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rested on everything—the broken fences, the shingles peeling off the barn, the gate that sagged to the ground, the house with the patches of white-wash that seemed loath to fall and leave the home naked and ashamed. Perhaps it was impossible for him to realize it. He and the farm had gone down together.

But with it all the man kept up a spasmodic optimism that helped him over many a depression, and he loved and was loved, and now the blessing that had come to the home held the promise of new happiness which could not be measured in money or new fences or whitewash.

“Dear,” he exclaimed to his wife, who with the baby in her lap was sitting on the porch, “I have fine news for you.”

“What is it?” she asked.

“The bishop is coming.”

“Oh, I’m so glad,” she exclaimed; “and now, my little man, my dear little gentleman”—she was addressing the tow-headed mass of pink, of course—“now you shall have a real name.”

“Henry Dean Rush, after your grandfather,” he added.

“The name I shall give,” she replied. “You surrendered the right to me, you know, and the

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name I shall give to the bishop will be the name he will bear."

"The name the bishop will bear?" he asked, teasing. But she was too busy thinking of the christening service to bother about what he was saying.

Colonel Rush let it be known that, in addition to the attractions of the bishop's presence, a great event in the Rush family would contribute largely to the interest of the occasion, and everybody who could determined to be on hand.

Even Jonas Wright, who declared only the week before that he never expected to rise from his rheumatism, amended his statement by the words, "A man's got to die some time, and while I ain't in a hurry, I'm going to see Adam Rush's baby christened, if the bishop has to read the funeral service afterwards."

Mr. Wright believed that the only way to pray was to kneel upon the knees—not on one knee, or on parts of two knees, but full, fair, and plump on both. He carried out his convictions with the rheumatic facts plainly before him, and he arrived on the floor with a groan. It was a long prayer, and he had to do what he could to adjust his pains to the hard boards and the cramped position, and it was observed during the supplications that his

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favorite word was "mercy." At the end of the prayer two neighbors began to help him up and a third came to their assistance, Mr. Wright ascending from the floor with a series of grunts and ejaculations that marked every turn and straightening of his elevation. Finally, as he settled heavily in the pew, he uttered, somewhat explosively, "Ah-h-ugh—thank the Lord !"

The congregation behaved very well, indeed, and tried hard to pity Mr. Wright, but its sense of humor had been touched, and the beautiful service and the fine sermon did not altogether allay it. Surely the bishop was never more impressive. It was often said of him that although he officiated in churches that were temples of architecture, magnificent in size and furnishing, it was his greater joy to come close to people in the little country building where every soul seemed to be within the reach of his hand. His tall, spiritual figure, his face as clear-cut as a cameo and as reverent as that of a saint, and his voice, full of tenderness and love and soothing, all made a deep impression, and yet many were thinking of the little bundle of humanity whose occasional cries drifted into the church from the carriage outside.

For Colonel and Mrs. Rush were waiting for the

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moment when they should enter, and Ephraim and Mandy were body-guards to the young candidate for life's honors and heaven's blessings. As on another great occasion, the colonel and Ephraim seemed to be useless, but they felt that they belonged in the situation, and they walked off some of their nervousness by circling the carriage.

Colonel Rush had changed with the years. Even in his best clothes—which had seen long seasons of service—he had the look of one who should have done better with his life and abilities. He had become one of the multitude who just get along.

The moment came. In the little mother's arms rested the young life, with his eyes wide open and his usually vigorous voice lost in wonderment, for he had never seen a crowd of people, and the man at the altar was a genuine novelty. The colonel walked erect and conscious, with some of the pride of the army days, but the wife thought of nothing but the precious burden she carried, refusing to intrust it to any one else—even to Mandy. Colonel Rush stood so that he faced a large part of the congregation, with the air of a man who knew he was there, but felt a constantly increasing fear that he might drop something or slip a word. Ephraim and Mandy stood up in the carriage and looked in through a

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window. A dozen men and boys were peering through the other windows, and the door framed all it could hold.

Quiet was in the sanctuary, and the bishop's rich voice rolled like a benediction. The tones seemed to swell, and they passed in great waves of solemnity down the aisle, through the door, out the windows, and among the trees, as he prayed :

"Grant that *the old Adam in this child* may be so buried that the *new Adam* may be raised up in him," and the bishop, as was his custom, placed a powerful emphasis on the Adam.

Perhaps the congregation would have restrained itself as well as when Mr. Wright was arising from his prayers, but the words came so unexpectedly that Colonel Adam Rush blushed—and the people saw it. Then he did worse. In an unfortunate moment he looked to the pews, and beheld the men and women trying to bite the smiles from their lips. A low but undeniable laugh came from the rear seat, and the merriment barely escaped finding a general and a hilarious outlet, while Colonel Adam Rush felt the perspiration breaking from his forehead as if the pores had become miniature geysers.

Unmindful of the situation the bishop went solemnly on, and in a few minutes reached the name :

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"ADAM RUSH, Junior."

The smiles deepened, but the worst was over, and the service was concluded without an open demonstration of the general feeling. Then, when the little mother went down the aisle every expression seemed to change—the smiles faded into sympathy and respect for the sweet, patient wife, who had shown what love could do through time and circumstance, and who, with misfortunes dragging from the earth, could still look up and see heaven.

She went on home, but the colonel remained, at her request, to meet the people and receive their congratulations. One of the last in the line was Jonas Wright. Colonel Rush helped him down the steps and took his arm along the path.

"Fine sermon, colonel; one of the finest I ever heard—ah-h-ugh!" And his lips muttered.

"Say it out loud, Mr. Wright," suggested the colonel; "it will do you good. There's nothing like it for rheumatism."

"No, sir; no, sir. It's against my rule, sir, against my principles, sir, to swear in a church or in a church-yard; against my principles, sir; but mum it! mum it! mum it!—wait till I get to the road."

They were about to reach the road, when Colonel

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Rush looked back and saw the bishop approaching, whereupon he said to his companion, "You'll have to hold in a little longer, Mr. Wright. Here is the bishop." And both turned to greet him.

"Splendid sermon, sir; it did us all good. And the christening—fine, sir, fine! And I'm mighty glad you gave it to him so hard. He deserved every bit of it, sir, every bit of it."

The bishop did not understand; and when Mr. Wright in his own way explained that it was about getting the old Adam out of the child and raising a new man, he broke forth in a peal of hearty laughter.

"Why," he said to Colonel Rush, "you knew of course that those words were in the regular service?"

"I didn't know it before—or I had forgotten it, bishop, but there is no doubt about the fact that I know it now."

III

THE LITTLE MOTHER

AUTUMN went; winter held on as long as it could, and when it suddenly broke, spring came with the ardor of summer and burst into a riot of bud and song.

In one corner of the Rush yard was a little shelter, well protected by the trees, where love had spent many a happy hour. In the early days the husband and wife used to sit there and hold each other's hands, and dream that the roses which bloomed along the fence would last through all the years. But as seasons passed and the flowers dropped, and dreams had rude awakenings, the place was left to itself, and tangled vines and old leaves told the story of its desolation.

Just how Ephraim knew that his mistress would want to sit there again nobody—not even himself—could explain, but something impelled him to spend an afternoon in fixing it up. Then, when the snowdrops were peeping from the earth and the bluebirds were singing in the poplars, the little mother came out and saw what Ephraim had done; and when he

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watched her bring out the young man—the long little bundle of white with the queer little pink head—and take him to the nook, the old darkey chuckled with satisfaction. “Dare’ll be plenty more ob lovin’ dare now,” he said to himself.

And he was right. A new and keener delight had come to enliven the patient love that had kept her heart full but heavy. Lucy Rush was below medium stature, frail looking at first sight, but on closer acquaintance showing those indications of will and endurance which make womanhood a physical enigma. She had deep blue eyes, the shade that is found only on a wayside violet; a true mother’s face full of sympathetic lights, and brown hair touched slightly by the frosts of time and trouble.

But as she gazed into the wee blue-gray eyes—the blue of her own mingled with the gray of her husband’s—her face lighted up with a youth that was eternal. The smiles smoothed the wrinkles in her motherly face, and the little fellow laughed back as if it were all very funny.

In the tree a bluebird began to sing, and then the blue-gray eyes sought the music. Presently his little lips began to move, and he was actually trying to imitate the sounds. It was not a great success, and he reached up his pink arms as if he wanted to take

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the bird and find out how a thing so much smaller than himself could make so much noise.

To the mother it was the prettiest sight she had ever seen. She was fond of all nature—of its flowers, its birds, its trees—and this sign that her son inherited her passion went deep into her soul. She tried to point out the feathered songster, and she felt like calling it names when it ungallantly flew away.

But soon a robin came, and then the little lips tried again to match its song, and the mother knew in her heart that angels were hovering near.

So every good afternoon they made a visit to this shelter, and when Adam slept the mother looked back over the years. If a tear started she would quickly gaze into the little face, and then a smile would vanquish the memories.

But it was very hard to forget the past or to look towards the future with joy or with hope. She was the prettiest girl in Wheatley when the young men went off to the war, and many of them would have laid down life for her. Then after the long waiting the few returned, and of the few the hero was Adam Rush. Exposure and a different life had changed him somewhat, but the eyes of admiration could see nothing that was discreditable. Their courtship was ideal, their marriage all that a union of heart and

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mind could be ; and in the first years love threw its glamour over every disappointment and difficulty. Her husband treated her with the finest chivalry ; his devotion never flagged, and yet with it all there was the inevitability of the down movement of a man capable of much in the world who sank to his habits instead of rising above them. To a woman of her spirit something more than devotion and getting along was necessary. Her husband had come to her as one who had risen above his fellows, and to see him from week to week and from year to year drifting back to the level of a commonplace existence pulled hard upon her heartstrings. And yet, with it all, there was not a kinder, better man in Wheatley ; and when she sighed and said this she forgot the other things, until crops and bills and the material facts of life brought them hideously before her.

Once more the bird sang, and the blue-gray eyes opened and the child awoke with a smile as if he had been dreaming of very happy scenes. The mother kissed him in pure happiness, and became so interested in his seeking of the bird that she did not hear Ephraim coming until he was almost to the nook. She looked up and saw him leading the old horse.

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"Mis' Lucy," said Eph, "I guess you wouldn't let de ole man hab Adam fer er minit."

"Why, Ephraim, what in the world do you want with him?"

"Nebber mind, Mis' Lucy, if you'll only let me take him in my arms, I'll show you, and I won't hurt him a bit—'deed, I won't, Mis' Lucy."

She was a little uncertain, but, having every confidence in Ephraim, consented, wondering what he was going to do.

The negro took Adam and first carried him near the head of the horse; then allowed him to pull the mane, and finally, before Mrs. Rush could object, placed him upon the saddle, securely holding him, so that no harm might befall.

The baby showed not the slightest sign of fear, and crowed with delight, and even after Ephraim had taken him off stretched his hands towards the animal as if he wanted to remain close to him. Ephraim beamed with delight.

"I knowed it; I knowed it," he exclaimed, as he gave Adam back to Mrs. Rush. "He ain't afeared o' nothin', and he's goin' to be de finest gentleman dat was ever born." And then he explained that it was an old tradition in the Rush family, with which Ephraim and his parents had always lived, that if a

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baby did not cry when it was first placed upon the back of a horse, it was a sign that it would grow up without fear and with a passion for horses.

A pang of disappointment shot through the mother's heart, and for a moment she hated horses. She wanted him to be of gentler inclinations—she would rather see him singing back to the birds.

But that feeling was overwhelmed by a greater joy, a tidal wave of surprise and happiness, that filled her heart, now grown so much larger, and made her cheeks red, her eyes moist, her whole frame a glow of bliss, for the little lips opened and from them came a noise that cannot be expressed in letters, but which sounded something like "Mum-maw."

His first word and—hers; and from that moment on his life and—hers. If need be she would die for her husband, but now she must live for her boy.

Later in the season, when she sat with the little fellow under the tree, she saw a most astonishing thing. The eggs had been hatched; the birdlings were old enough for flight into the great big world. But each seemed afraid to try its wing. Then it was Mrs. Rush saw the mother bird deliberately push one of the young from the nest, and it fluttered in

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fright and then in a few minutes chirruped in gladness.

She wondered if she could ever push her young boy from his home into the world. "No, no, no," she exclaimed, as though terrified by the thought.

IV

YOUNG ADAM MAKES A FRIEND

WHEN Adam was eight years old he knew the country around Wheatley as well as any member of the family, and more than once he found the right path when he and Ephraim got lost in the woods.

"I 'clare to gracious!" said Ephraim, in his loftiest admiration, "he's the 'stonishin'est boy dat ever lived. He kin find his way home from anywhere, and he ain't afeared o' nothin', and he's jest a natural born zero, dat's what he is, and I'm one as knows what he's a-talkin' about."

"He takes after his mother a lot," commented Mandy.

"He jest takes after hisself," said Eph, bluntly. "Nobody was ever born like him to take after, and consequently therefore he couldn't take after nobody else."

This strain of eulogy went on until Ephraim had used up his vocabulary and worn it threadbare by iteration. One reason for the outburst was that Eph

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that day had a twinge of his "rheumatics," and had been sent to the store. Adam went with him, and when both were out of sight of the house Adam told Eph to rest in the woods while he would do the errand, which he did in short time and with complete success. The incident had some unexpected results. Adam felt the bigness of going alone a full two miles along the road, and he was not slow to repeat the escapade, for every time he went to the store he saw the little girl.

He had been very good for a whole day, and his mother gave him two cents, with the permission to spend it as he chose when he and Ephraim took another trip to the store. He tried to keep his impetuous desires in check, but the temptation was too great, and the next morning he felt himself drawn towards the goal of his hopes and his finances. He made the ground fairly fly beneath his feet, so that he might get back before his absence was discovered. Once in a while he would halt to get his breath, and he shied a few pebbles at the birds that sang to him from the trees and fences, but it was not long before he was at the little box of a building, with his fortune ready for the spending. But he was doomed to a great disappointment. The store was closed and there was no one at home. The whole family had gone.

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He felt like sitting down and crying, and possibly he would have done so, but he heard wheels on the road, and looking up saw a curious man driving towards him in a covered wagon.

"Well, my young man, perhaps you can give me some information," said the stranger, as he drew up and alighted.

Adam had never seen any one like him. He was short and a bit stout, and his legs were bowed as though the weight of his big head was too much for them to carry without showing some sort of a protest, or at least demonstrating that they were being badly strained. Adam had read in one of the funny picture-books about bad boys asking their grandpa to be their tunnel while they were playing cars, because he had bow legs, and Adam wondered if this man played cars with his boys. He was so lost in his surprise and his thoughts that he made no reply to the stranger's remarks.

"I've been driving around here a full hour without finding anybody alive but you. A cemetery is a howling mass-meeting compared with this place. Where is the man who keeps this store?"

"I don't know, sir."

"What's your name? Where do you live? Father and mother belong here?" He rattled the

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questions out in a way that benumbed Adam's speech, and the stranger proceeded to fasten his horse. Then he came and sat down on a dry-goods box and asked Adam to sit beside him.

"Well, never mind," he said. "You're waiting to buy something, and I'll wait to sell something, and to pass away the time I'll tell you a story—a real true story. Do you want to hear it?"

"Yes, sir."

"That's right; that's the boy in you. We want to hear stories so bad in our youth that we are afraid of the truth after we grow up. You don't understand that, but you will some day. Well, now about the story I'm going to tell. Make yourself comfortable now, and we'll pretend that we are happy. And remember this, if you want to be happy, think you are happy. Do you know why a tadpole is never happy? It's because he's always thinking about being a frog. Be content in the state which you are in, even if it is the state of matrimony. But that's not our story, is it?"

"I do not know, sir," replied Adam, his eyes growing larger in wonderment at this strange man.

"Of course not. And that's bad. Always do one thing; never try to draw molasses and vinegar at the

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same time—the vinegar 'll get ahead of you. The story—that's what you want, isn't it?"

"Yes, sir."

"Well, suppose we kill time by beginning. Once there was a boy, and he was smaller than you, and he was so poor that he didn't have a pair of shoes for winter, and the time came when he had to strike out for himself; and he went to a big town and he got work at seventy-five cents a week, and the very first week he saved five cents out of his wages. And the next week he saved five cents, and the next week he saved five cents, and he kept on saving five cents; and after a while he got more money, and he saved some of it every week; and the weeks went on into years, and the boy kept on saving, and then when he got to be a man he bought the store in which he worked and made the store larger, and kept on making it larger, until now he is known all over the country, and his name is—can you tell me who he is?"

"I'm sorry, sir, but I don't know."

"Haven't you ever heard of Samuel Salt?"

"No, sir."

"Well, well, well, as Solomon said, what is fame? Not heard of Samuel Salt or Salt's store?"

Adam shook his curly head sadly.

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"Why, my boy, I'm Samuel Salt. Just count the letters—S-a-m-u-e-l S-a-l-t—ten. Count S-a-l-t'-s s-t-o-r-e—ten again. Count f-r-e-s-h g-o-o-d-s—ten a third time. There you have it—Samuel Salt, Salt's store, fresh goods—the lucky tens lined out in a lucky three. Now, what is your name?"

"Adam Rush, Jr."

"Adam, four; Rush, four; Jr., two; total ten. So far you're all right, my boy, but keep your dad alive, or you'll lose your mascot—he is alive, isn't he?"

"Oh, yes, sir."

"Now, ten is the number that the whole world moves on—ten mills make a cent, ten cents a dime, ten dimes a dollar, and ten dollars a Christmas-present. Then the ten commandments. The world does not move on them as much as it might, but they are useful—yes, they are useful. And as you get old you'll find ten cropping up all the time, and look out for it, young man, look out for it."

Then Mr. Salt observed the tightly-clinched hand of Adam, and with keen perception knew what was within. He took hold of the little fist, greatly to Adam's dismay, and with a twinkle in his queer eyes that looked like a glint of sunshine from a piece of bright steel, said, "Now, I'm going to guess how

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much it is, and for luck I'll say ten cents. Is it ten?"

"No, sir," replied Adam.

"Then next to ten in luck is the half of ten. It must be a nickel."

"No, sir," said Adam again.

"My, my, my! I didn't eat the chicken's wishbone this morning or see any rabbits in the graveyard as I came along, did I?"

"I don't know, sir."

"Well, when you get a chicken's wishbone or see a rabbit in a graveyard, crowd your luck; but before you buy the lottery ticket put all your money in the savings-bank. You don't understand that either. Well, I'll make a last guess. In that pretty little hand of yours you have the great fortune of two cents, now, haven't you?"

"Yes, sir," he answered, wondering how the strange little man found it out.

"And you were going to buy——?"

"Candy, sir."

"And the man who keeps the store is not here. That's too bad. Let us see what we have in this wagon of mine." And he arose and wobbled towards it, followed by the eyes of Adam, which opened still wider as he saw him dig his hand down and bring

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it up full of candy and then with the other take three big ginger cakes shaped like horses, the most astonishing cakes he had ever seen. And when the man brought them to him and poured them into his lap he did not know what to say.

"They're from Salt," said the stranger, "but they're all fresh."

"I can't take them," said Adam, finally; "I've only two cents."

Mr. Salt laughed and patted him on the shoulder. "Keep your two cents, my young man. Do you know how much I've got in my store? No? Ten barrels of cakes and eight boxes of candy."

"Are they all full?"

"Mostly."

"And you can eat all you want?"

The impossibility of it loosened Adam's tongue.

"Yes," said Mr. Salt, his merriment breaking forth into a happy cackle. "I could if I desired, but my clerks do most of that for me."

Mr. Salt pulled out his watch and found that it was nearing twelve o'clock, and that he was missing his noonday meal.

"Now, my young man, can you direct me to a place where I can get something to eat?"

The question seemed grotesque to Adam when he

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thought of that wagon with the cakes and candy, but the spirit of hospitality was bred in him and the possession of the sweets sharpened its force.

"Yes, sir; I am sure we could find dinner almost ready at our house, and father and mother would be glad to see you."

"Then jump into the wagon—right there in front—and let's hurry home to your father and mother, for unless I am mistaken they will be looking for you soon."

As they went along Adam felt a new sense of comfort with his companion, and he made bold to ask a few questions.

"What do you do with all the candy and cakes the clerks don't eat?"

"We try to sell it," laughed Mr. Salt. "You see, my boy, Salt's store keeps *everything*—ten letters again—and it goes on the business principle that the sale of one thing ought to lead to the sale of some other thing. For instance, a pound of cheap candy ought to call for a bottle of paregoric: result, profit on candy, two cents; profit on paregoric, five cents, and so on, not including the doctor who deals at Salt's store. You don't understand that, either. Well, some day you'll know all about it. But don't forget the ten, don't——"

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Adam interrupted to direct him into the gate, and with Mr. Salt still talking they soon arrived at the house.

Search had been begun for Adam, and his father was considerably mystified by his appearance in Mr. Salt's wagon, but explanations were quickly made and Adam escaped rebuke in the presence of the guest.

They were all soon at the table.

"All signs fail in dry weather," said Mr. Salt cheerily, "and when hunger comes along modesty wilts like a stand-up collar in August. I apologize, sir, for inviting myself through your little son—a fine boy, sir, a wonderfully fine boy, one of the most intelligent I ever met—for inviting myself to your table, but I hope you will pardon me, and if you come to Chester, Samuel Salt will be delighted to show his appreciation in a more solid way, although he cannot have the happiness of Mrs. Salt presiding over the feast." And he made an elaborate bow to Mrs. Rush.

"Your wife is away?" said Mrs. Rush.

"Away?" exclaimed Mr. Salt, with a loud laugh. "Well, I should say so. She's so far away that she can't get back. Fact is, madam, there isn't any Mrs. Salt. There came near being one many years ago

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—a Miss Fish, madam—but at the last moment she declined to be salted.” And he cackled again at his little joke.

It soon became evident to Colonel and Mrs. Rush that their guest was a character given to incessant speech, and he proved their suspicion, for he rattled along on almost every topic that came to his mind, and showed no hesitation in referring to immediate matters. For instance, there was fried chicken. He praised it as the finest he ever ate.

“Reminds me of Ben,” he continued. “Ben’s my colored man. Means well, and all that sort of thing, but he and his good intentions are like some relations I know—they love one another all right, but they can’t get along together. Ben works cheap, but steals enough to average up. Last year he was elected delegate to an African conference in the next county. When he got back I asked, ‘Did it do you good?’ And Ben answered, ‘Did it do me good, Boss? ’Deed it did. I jest cut fried chicken crazy.’ Then I said, ‘Did you shout much?’ And he answered, ‘Truf is, Boss, I eat so, I weren’t much shucks on shoutin’, but I beat ’em all on groanin’, Boss; I jest led de band in groanin’.’ Then I said, ‘Did you derive much spiritual benefit?’ And his eyes popped almost out as he answered, ‘No, sah;

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no, sah, not a drap, not a single drap. Mefodist, sah; Mefodist; and what's mo', sah, wasn't any to be had.' " And after all had laughed at the story, Mr. Salt declared he had Ben's appetite for chicken. This said, he skipped gayly to the next topic.

"I was telling your son, sir," bowing to Colonel Rush, "something about my belief in the luck of the number ten, especially when arranged in rows of threes. Samuel Salt, ten letters; Salt's store, ten letters; fresh goods, ten letters; that's one list of three. And the second list of three tens is: everything seasonable kept on hand. Now, for the third list of three tens I make changes as often as possible, and there is where I have my troubles. I do declare I think the American language was got up by lunatics, and one time I broke away from it; yes, sir, I broke away, and it almost broke me up. But maybe you've heard of my fish advertisement?"

"We are quite a distance from Chester, Mr. Salt, and I must confess that it has not reached Wheatley."

"Well, that ~~is~~ strange; thought it had gone everywhere. Well, it was just this way: I got in a big lot of shad and trout, and I wanted to run the sale on my third lucky line of lucky tens, but, turn it and twist it as I tried, I couldn't get a ten-letter fish line.

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While I was at it I heard a city drummer telling a new story, and I listened. It was about an Irishman seeing a boat named P-s-y-c-h-e, and the Irishman said it was the queerest way to spell fish he ever heard of. So I said to the drummer, 'How did you say he spelled it?' And he spelled out the letters for me and I wrote them down. 'Well,' says I to myself, 'if it's good enough for an Irishman, it's good enough for me,' and I proceeded to write my sign."

Mr. Salt went through the arithmetic of it all as usual, and with due demonstrations with his knife and fork, which he waved in the air cutting lines and squares out of the atmosphere, so to speak, produced a mental impression like :

LOOK AT THIS FINE PSYCHE JUST CAUGHT
--

"I thought it would attract attention, and it did—oh, it did! Pretty soon Preacher Weir came along, and he says :

"'Good morning, Brother Salt. Where did you catch her?'

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“ ‘Catch who?’ I asked.

“ ‘Si-kee,’ he said.

“ ‘I never heard of her,’ I answered.

“ ‘But you’ve got her on your sign there,’ he declared.

“And then—well, then it began, and if ever a poor stumbling sinner got more than he deserved, it was me. I never studied anything about them old heathen gods and goddesses, and I never intend to, but I just tell you I wanted to kill that drummer. But what could I do? The town had me, and it was Si-kee this and Si-kee that, until I let ’em go on without trying to hit back or explain. And that’s why I stick to the dictionary, even if I do know that it’s fuller of more craziness than all the lunatic asylums and Congress put together.”

Mr. Salt cut his own laugh short in order to attend to the chicken, and for several minutes his mouth was so occupied that there was not room for words to escape. But with him eating was a continuous operation while it lasted, and soon there was another interval for talk. And he explained that his visit to Wheatley was with a view of extending his wholesale trade, but so far the results had not measured up to his expectations.

“From what you have said, Mr. Salt, I judge that

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you attribute your success to luck and the dictionary?" remarked Colonel Rush.

"Not by a jugful, sir. To neither of them, sir. What does luck do? There is an old fellow in Chester who says, 'Whiskey never killed anybody, but it gets 'em so they die.' Contrarywise with luck. It don't make a man rich, but it sometimes gets him so he can grab hold of the money. As to the dictionary—well, it's one place where failure always comes before success. No, sir, my working rules are different. Would you like to hear them?"

"I should be delighted."

"First," said Mr. Salt, sticking up a finger, "'If you want to skip woe, you must pay as you go.' Branching from which are other truths, such as, 'If you don't lay by, debt will lay you out;' and, 'The fellow that draws the interest will generally get the principal;' and, 'To-morrow is a bad pay-day;' and other bits of wisdom that have come to me in my experience.

"Second, 'Roost high when the other fellow lays low, and lay low when the other fellow roosts high;' out of which grows a simple observation: 'If you lay low long enough, any storm will blow over you;' or this: 'If the other fellow beats you, learn his game.'

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“Third, ‘Never measure your potatoes by the vines,’ which means many things, such as not judging a man by his clothes, for an old suit has just as many pockets and they’re apt to have more in ’em.

“Fourth, ‘Keep your temper and keep your customers.’ Getting mad shortens life and flattens the pocket-book. The devil runs your temper, and when it runs away with you the devil is to pay.

“Fifth, ‘When in doubt go to church.’ You may laugh at this, but it’s one of the best of the lot. There’s nothing that let’s a man think better than a long prayer or a slow sermon. And he sees things, too. One night our preacher was giving us a missionary sermon. I don’t take much stock in missionaries—got enough heathen right here at home. But once in a while I listened, and when he began to give figures about what it all meant to our trade, about the Africans and people of India and China and the others needing our cotton stuffs, and how the trade was increasing, and how he had a report that it would probably be doubled soon, I saw that it was a good time to lay in a big stock of calicoes—and it paid; yes, sir, it paid. But that is not the only thing. Church-going soothes a man; it just makes him rest; some people say it’s the only time I quit talking; it calls upon you to stop

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and sit still, and it helps you in every way. Yes, sir, if you want to calm down and get a level view of things go to church, and the longer the sermon the better for you."

Mr. Salt had used his fingers to count the rules, and he had unconsciously kept his hand extended, so that when he ended his list he looked and laughed, the others joining in the merriment.

Then the sweet potato pie was brought on. "Gracious me!" exclaimed Mr. Salt, "this does remind me of Ben. Same conference. 'Mars Salt,' said Ben, telling me about it, 'I jest eat dat fried chicken scand'lous tw'ell I was so chock up full dat I feel like bustin', and, bless my soul, what did dey do den but fetch on sweet 'tater pie,' and Ben shut his eyes and groaned as he thought of it. Now, my young friend," directing his words to Adam, "do you know how Ben made way for the pie?"

"No, sir."

"Can you tell me how a chicken goes?"

Adam thought it a very queer question, but he replied, with a laugh, "Sometimes cock-a-doodle-do, and sometimes cluck-cluck."

"Well, this is the way Ben gave it: 'I didn't know what to do, but I wanted that pie powerful

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bad ; so I calls quiet like, "Cluck-cluck; cluckety-cluckety-cluck ; please, mister chicken, can't you roost a leetle closer down dare and make room fur a piece ob de pie," and, bless your soul, dey did, and I took a second helpin'.' Oh, no more," exclaimed Mr. Salt, throwing up his hand to Mrs. Rush. "Thank you, thank you, but—really, madam, it's the finest pie I ever tasted, and if you will insist, make it a small slice."

After the dinner Mr. Salt tried as delicately as he could to offer payment for the entertainment of himself and his horse, but it was politely declined. He expressed his appreciation in unmeasured terms, leaving the very last message to young Adam.

"If you ever want a friend, my boy," he said, as he placed his hand upon the curly head, "come to Samuel Salt. He may not be pretty to look at, but his heart is in the right place and he don't owe any man a cent."

Little did Adam think—little did Mr. and Mrs. Rush appreciate—what this was to mean in after years.

V

TWO BOYS AND A GIRL

“**C**OME heah, boy, I’s e got somfin’ to show you.”

It was Ephraim calling. Adam had finished his breakfast and was standing on the porch. He looked and saw Ephraim waving from the stable, and he knew that it must be worth a little hurry. So he ran.

“Ain’t she the purtiest thing you eber seen?” declared Ephraim, pointing to a little colt, a beautiful creature, almost as brown as chocolate, with lovely long legs and such grace of neck and body that it seemed perfect.

“Oh, Eph!” exclaimed Adam, in uncontrollable delight; “will it grow, and can I pet it?”

Ever since the afternoon Ephraim placed the baby on the horse’s back, Adam’s love for the noblest of quadrupeds had grown steadily into a passion, and now, when a little horse that seemed just the size for him had really come to the farm, his enthusiasm knew no bounds. He jumped up and down and wanted to hug it, but Ephraim kept him at a safe dis-

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tance, and let him pat it only by reaching over as far as his arm would extend.

But the die was cast, and thenceforth the colt was Adam's idol. It was hard to get him away from the stable even for his meals.

"Guess I'll hab to move your bed down heah," said Ephraim. "Maybe you and de colt might want to sleep togedder." But seeing that his words fell on deaf ears, he added, somewhat harshly, "Now, git away from heah. You'se a reg'lar nuisance, that's what you is, and I'se gwine to ask de ker'nel and Mis' Ruth to make you quit bodderin' me. Now, stop it, I tell you," for Adam and the colt were playing boisterously. "Stop it! I'se gwine right up to de house, dat's what I'se gwine to do." And he moved as if to carry out his threat, but before he got many steps the agile youngster made a flying leap and landed around the neck of the old man and bore him to the ground. Ephraim's pretended anger was beautiful to behold, and Adam began to do and say everything in mollification of it, promising that Ephraim might have half of his candy money for tobacco, and that he would bring him a big slice of cake on Sunday.

A week later there was a distressing scene at the dinner-table. Colonel Rush said, as softly and diplo-

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matically as possible, that he had a good offer for the colt.

"But, papa——" Adam could not finish the sentence, so sudden was the blow and so overwhelming the possibility.

"Of course, my boy, you are too young to understand everything, but your father tells you that he needs the money the colt will bring, and that he will get you another one when he has the chance."

"I don't want any other one," exclaimed the boy.

"But my boy——"

"You shan't sell my colt," he almost shouted, his cheeks turning very pale and his mouth trembling with passion.

"Adam, that is not the way to speak to your father," protested Mrs. Rush, gently.

He bit his lip. Suddenly signs of tears filled his eyes, and he abruptly slipped off his chair and hurried out of the room. Rage and grief possessed him. He did not want to see any one; he just wished to get away—to go off somewhere to bear his wretchedness alone.

Colonel and Mrs. Rush sat silently, each waiting for the other to speak. The mother ached to cry, but held back her emotions until the strain became too great.

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"My dear," she asked, "is it positively necessary?"

"We must pay something on that bill," he said.

"Isn't there some other sacrifice we can make?"

"I'm down almost to the last cent, and the crop money will not be in for a month or more yet."

"You may take my——"

"No, no, no, not that. You are always giving up. I won't——"

But it was another sad repetition. Three years before a part had been set aside for her new best dress, and every season it had gone for something else. And it went again instead of the colt.

Adam hurried out of sight of the house. Then he made for the long shaded side road where people seldom travelled, and he intended to have a good cry all to himself, but somehow when a few tears fell he was ashamed of them. He did not know it, but his manhood was making pride subdue the grieving. Then he had a different feeling. He was hurt inside, and from the wounds big resolutions arose. He would go out into the world and make money enough to buy his own colt—to buy his colt back from the man who was mean enough to get it from him.

By a détour he reached the road leading to the

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store. To the left of it ran a little stream. Presently he heard voices, and some one began to cry. He hurried along, and on the other side of the creek were a boy and a girl—the little girl whom he had seen at the store. The boy was pulling her hair and teasing her, and she could not defend herself, for the boy was a bully and she was a girl.

Adam did not know what to do. He could not wade the creek, and although it was not wide he could not jump across it, but he saw long grapevines hanging from the trees, and he had swung on some like them in the orchard at home. So he took hold of a strong one that was loose and, running down the small hill, propelled himself out into space, scarcely realizing what he was doing, and really feeling greatly surprised when he let go and landed in a confused heap on the other side. But he was not hurt, and he picked himself up readily and advanced upon the boy, who was somewhat bigger than himself.

“You let her alone,” he said.

“Who are you?” asked the boy.

“Who are you?” asked Adam.

“I’m Paul Bradson, and my papa owns the biggest house around here,” boasted the other. “Who are you?”

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"I won't tell you," said Adam.

"Oh, I know who you are," sneered Mr. Paul Bradson: "you're a sissy boy, and you wear curls."

Adam did not know what he meant, but he took it to be something uncomplimentary, and, as his belligerency was aroused by the events of the afternoon, he advanced upon the other so swiftly that retreat was impossible, for he simply threw himself against him and sent him rolling over a stump into the mud that lined the stream.

Mr. Paul Bradson crawled out in a bedraggled condition and set up a yell that did credit to his lungs, saying, as he swallowed his sobs, "I'll tell—tell—my—my—pa-pa-pa on you—you."

The little girl then took part in the conversation, pointing her scorn along a straightened finger directly to her tormentor, and joyfully shouting, "Cry-baby! Cry-baby!"

Somehow Adam felt a sensation of bigness as he saw the enemy back away, and he certainly had no desire to leave the little girl, in which he showed fine judgment and discrimination, for she was a lovely minx, straight, slender, and graceful, with soft brown eyes, and bright golden hair which looked like strands of sunshine, and her face was the color of the wild roses that bloomed along the banks of the

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stream. The tears had all gone, and in their place was the merriest smile, like the clearing after the shower.

"He is a mean boy," she said, "and you are a nice boy."

"I'll go part of the way home with you," he declared, in appreciation of her praise.

Clasping each other's hand they walked along the bank, saying little except to remind themselves occasionally that Paul Bradson was not good and that they were glad he fell into the mud.

"I know your name. It is Adam Rush."

"I know yours. It's Nora Weatherby, and your father sells candy."

It was not a long distance to the store, but they took their time, and rested occasionally to throw pebbles into the water or to watch the fish, but finally they reached the road and came in sight of the building.

"I guess I'll go home now," said Adam, turning. He declined her invitation to keep on and get a piece of candy, until he looked up and saw his mother waving to him. She had missed him from the house and was looking for him. He did not feel like going to her. The colt came back to his mind, and even Nora was forgotten in the disturbances it caused to his thoughts.

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But he obeyed, and his mother, looking very frightened, yet immeasurably relieved, whispered to him, "It's all right, my dear. Your colt will not be sold."

And Adam that night went to sleep with a smile and had very pleasant dreams.

VI

SPOIL THE ROD AND SPARE THE CHILD

ADAM was slow in getting into books. His mother taught him fitfully, but she had a great deal to do, and she could not give him the attention that he should have had. Then, too, he was not a very good pupil. He far preferred to be out with the colt, which was now broken, and he used all his persuasion to that end. Nevertheless he learned to read and write, and he got from the small library of the home—from the romances of Scott and some old books long forgotten—pleasant entertainment on the days when it was too wet to ride.

At that time the Civil War was going on. The effective men in Wheatley Hundred had enlisted or had been drafted, and that left the population short of its usual energies and many of its facilities, including the public school and church services. Colonel Rush was incapacitated by his wounds in the war with Mexico. He offered to fight, but the authorities declined to take him. In one way the war was a good thing for Wheatley. It raised the

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price of wheat and corn, and for several years something that almost amounted to prosperity came to the Rushes.

These were the formative years in the life of young Adam, and he undoubtedly suffered in almost everything except health. His riding and his out-of-door exercise gave him superb strength, and he grew to a splendid boyhood. There was only one other boy in the neighborhood who could come near to him in skill and endurance upon the back of a horse and in the things that go with a sturdy constitution. Mr. Bradson was off on work connected with the war most of the time, but he left Paul, his son, under the care of his aunt in the Wheatley home, and surrounded him with everything that money could furnish. In addition to horses, Paul had his own small vehicles, and in his way cut a swath in the affairs of the quiet district.

Another man who could not go to the war was Jonas Wright, whose rheumatism clung to him in spite of the imprecations which he showered upon it—when not in the church or the church-yard. Mr. Wright grew fond of Adam, and it was from the lips of the old man that Adam learned what a rider and fox-hunter he had been in his younger days. In fact, it was due to a fox-hunting incident that Mr.

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Wright owed much of his rheumatism. He was riding madly across country and taking the fences without a thought of the peril, when he and his horse went over into a ditch, and Mr. Wright lay under the animal in the shallow water for hours before he was found.

"I've been watching your riding, young man," he said to Adam one afternoon, "and I'm going to compliment you in the highest way I know how. If you come over to my place I'll give you one of the pups."

Adam could not find words to express his joy and gratitude, for he it known that the pup's parents were the finest fox hounds in the State. In peaceful times they had been in demand from many parts of the country, but the country was then given to more serious riding than the chase of four-legged animals; the man-hunt had taken the place of the fox-hunt, with the hunters drilled into vast armies and the brush of the game the prize of a nation's life.

Mr. Salt had made a deep impression upon Adam, and his injunction not to forget the lucky ten led to unexpected consequences. The colt was a mare, and Adam caused his father and mother to laugh very heartily when he announced that her name was Tennie. So when he came to select the proper

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cognomen for the pup he again remembered Mr. Salt, and asked his mother how to spell that queer word Mr. Salt had used for fish. When he informed Ephraim that the dog was to be called Psyche, the old man scratched his head and commented :

“Si-kee! Si-kee! Whar on de earth did you hear sich as dat? I’ve known of Sic-’em hollered to dogs, but Si-kee—dat goes beyand me.”

Adam had to adopt heroic measures to get Ephraim to use the right name, and finally, in spite of all he could do, the old fellow got it permanently to Sike.

With Tennie and Psyche Adam’s happiness was great. He explored the country, rode over hills, jumped fences, and ran after foxes—now grown more plentiful during the man-hunt—and gave the dog and the horse the practical training that was to show its excellence in later years.

After the war the men came home from the army, and the old life under new conditions began in Wheatley. The school-house was opened, and Percy Newill, a young teacher from another section, took charge. At first Adam did not attend, but his mother kept at him so steadily that he finally gave in. The school had then been opened a month, and the others were well ahead in their lessons. He received the usual greetings of the new boy. His

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seat was in front of that of Paul Bradson, and when he sat down after the opening exercises he quickly jumped up with a cry of pain. A large ugly bent pin had been placed on the bench. He was angry almost to the point of tears, and the snickers he heard behind him increased his desperation; but he obtained command of himself as quickly as he could and began to write upon his new slate. His head was bent upon his task.

Suddenly there was a sound as of swish, and a large pea struck him just behind the ear. He knew that Paul Bradson had sent it from his pea-shooter, which he had seen before school was called to order, and, turning quickly, he raised his slate and brought it down full upon Paul's head.

There was a smashing of slate, a howl from Paul, and general tumult in the room. The new teacher saw the act and called Adam before him, and told him to hold out his hand.

"I'll teach you, young man," he said, firmly, "that you cannot bring field manners into this school-room."

He raised a wicked rule with holes in it and brought it down full upon the outstretched palm. Adam winced.

Then the rule went up for another blow, when

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suddenly Adam reached out, caught the rule, and, taking it from the teacher, broke it in two. Throwing the pieces upon the floor, he went to his desk, gathered up his books and the frame of the slate, and, facing the trembling Paul, said :

“I dare you to come out in the road.”

“Leave this room,” exclaimed the teacher.

“All right,” said Adam. “I dare you to come together. Both of you are cowards.” And with that he left.

Mrs. Rush was surprised and grieved. She had hoped for so much in getting him to study, and now to have it all upset and a quarrel in the bargain was bitter disappointment. But somehow, when Adam told her the whole story, she could not blame him. She upbraided herself for letting her love blind her sense of right and duty, and she hoped—she almost prayed—that her husband might take the proper view of it and teach Adam what he most needed—discipline.

But when the details had been carefully imparted to the colonel, he put his hand on the boy's shoulder and said, “I'm very sorry it happened, my son, and it's extremely unfortunate not only for you, but for your father and mother,” but beyond that he would not go—just then.

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The same evening the school-teacher, accompanied by Mr. Jonas Wright, who was the head trustee, drove to the Rush house and asked to see Colonel Rush. They placed the case before him and declared that, while they desired to make no trouble, it was necessary for the good of the school, that had been opened after being closed so long, to settle the matter promptly. Mr. Newill gave his version, and Colonel Rush listened attentively, saying, beforehand, "Of course, gentlemen, if my son is in the wrong, I want him to make full apology and do all he can in reparation."

"Did you make any investigation to ascertain whether or not Adam had any provocation?" asked Colonel Rush, when the teacher ended.

"I acted on what I saw, and to make the lesson plain to the pupils I acted at once," said the teacher.

"It seems to me, Mr. Wright," said the colonel, turning to the trustee, "that before we go any further we might as well have the testimony of the other side."

"That's reasonable."

So Adam was called, and his father told him to give the facts as they happened to him, which Adam did without mentioning the name of Paul Bradson.

"Now you may go," said his father; "but stay in

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the house, so that you will be near when I call you."

After he had closed the door the colonel said, "Gentlemen, until to-day that boy has never been struck in punishment. His mother and his father believe in humane methods. He did not invite the attack in the school-room, and I want to say to you that I endorse everything he did." Speaking directly to the teacher, he added, "I'm almost sorry, sir, he didn't thrash you, for I am sure he could do it, and I want to ask you on your honor as a man, don't you think you acted unfairly in attacking him before you investigated the circumstances and fixed the blame?"

"Now, look here, both of you," put in Mr. Wright, "don't get to contending about this. I wouldn't mind if it wasn't for this danged rheumatism, for I could thrash you both, but we don't want any more fighting. I came over here to fix it up, and it's got to be fixed up right here and now. I take it that Mr. Newill is willing to admit that he has acted hastily, and that said, Adam can say he is sorry, and there you are—everything smoothed over and no hard feelings."

Mr. Wright worked vigorously in this direction and prevailed. So Adam was called into the room again.

"Adam," said the teacher, "I regret that I acted

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to-day without a full knowledge of the preceding facts, and I hope we shall get along better in the future."

"Adam," said his father, "I promised that you would say you were sorry for what had happened. Now, my little man, say it."

Adam hesitated a moment, but began :

"I am sorry—sorry——"

"That's it—that's all," interrupted Colonel Rush.

"Sorry that I broke my new slate," he added.

But Mr. Wright, seeing that something of the sort was coming, interposed and, in order that the peace negotiations might not fail, stepped in front of the boy, saying, quickly, "That's all right now—daddy'll buy you a new slate—and be sure to be at school in time to-morrow morning."

Good and bad came out of this. It made Adam and Paul enemies, but it stopped flogging in the Wheatley school. Oh, yes, there was something else. Mr. Wright went out into the room where Adam was, and said, softly, "If you want another pup, come over Saturday and get him."

VII

OVER THE HILLS AND FAR AWAY

IT is one of the curiosities of life that two strong persons seldom become good friends until they measure their strength in some kind of a combat. It may be with fists or it may be with arguments, but it is the fight that brings them closer together.

Percy Newill's temper was high, but that showed the good metal that was in him; it explained, too, why he could appreciate and then admire the spirit of Adam as being something finer than the dull average of the commonplace natures he was trying to teach.

To Adam came the conviction that Newill had done what he could to let him out as easily as possible, and somehow he began to look upon him as one whose favor was worth having.

So in the inevitability of things the two became friends, and this was the most fortunate association outside of his family that Adam ever had in Wheatley, for it was from Newill that he learned to read not only with enjoyment, but with some purpose. All

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human experience is agreed that there is nothing more profitable than the reading habit, but it must be caught young. Let a person—especially a male person—reach maturity without acquiring it, and the after-life lacks a means of happiness which all the gold of earth cannot purchase. A man may make millions or reach a throne; he may found splendid institutions and crowd them with literature of the ages; he may associate with the elect and the brilliant of his time, but if he cannot bury himself in a book and shut out the world and its cares, he is poorer than the ragged urchin who lives delectable hours with the heroes of all time.

The few months the school was open passed all too quickly for Adam, not that he liked the school so much, but because he found Newill agreeable. To him Newill imparted the information that he was teaching simply to save enough money to begin the study of law, and that he hoped to enter the office of Mr. Crawford, in Chester, as soon as he completed his service in Wheatley. Adam accompanied him more than five miles on the way to the county seat, and soon after he turned to go back home there were tears that told how much he regretted the parting.

But it was not a time for moping. There was invitation in the sunshine, glory in the air, and Adam

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mounted on Tennie was galloping over the hills after Psyche and Wheat, the other hound, which in turn were after foxes. It was magnificent sport, and Adam loved it so well that he did not do his duty by the farm.

There was another attraction in these rides. Nora had reached a beautiful girlhood ; her hair had turned to deeper gold ; the wild roses in her cheeks were warmer, and her halting and simple speech had grown to the measure that could send whoops over hills and volleys of commands to horse or dog. She, too, had a horse, and she rode like one born to the saddle, and thus it happened that she and Adam met often along the highway, raced up hill and down dale, and spent joyous hours together.

Paul Bradson sometimes joined them, but his presence broke the comfort of the ride, and they escaped him when they could, which made him only the more eager to force himself into their excursions. He envied Adam's swifter horse and his fox hounds, and he himself soon had dogs to compete with those of Adam, fine ones bought by his indulgent father at large expense from celebrated kennels. Then came contests, with varying fortunes, but with the majority of the victories to Psyche and Wheat.

During these months, which stretched into years,

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the little mother tried to direct Adam more closely to his books, and his father endeavored to get more work out of him for the farm, and between the two he gave satisfaction to neither and found his largest pleasure on the back of Tennie.

Colonel Rush did not improve his own circumstances or the fortunes of the family. The temporary prosperity from the war-time prices was soon gone, and the convivialities that the returning soldiers brought to Wheatley found more sympathy with him than his agricultural duties. Then Ephraim was laid up with the rheumatism, and everything drifted.

But with it all Adam clung to his horse and his dogs, and the feeling of competition between him and Paul grew steadily stronger until it culminated in a memorable contest.

It was a fox-hunt to prove the superiority of horse, rider, and dog, and it began in the early morning. Nora was there with her hair imprisoned in a knot and her brown eyes full of suppressed excitement. Paul was on his swiftest horse, determined and sullen. Adam spoke to Tennie as if she were human. The dogs fretted for the chase.

There were no formalities in the start, no rich costumes upon the riders, no frills or discussions. The dogs bounded away at the word and the riders

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followed, Nora keeping close to Adam. Up the big hill they went, and then came the unmistakable cry. The game had been found and the race was on. Sly reynard knew the roads and kept away from them ; through brush and over fence and stream he made his course, doubling when he could and doing all in his way to mystify and mislead the hounds. But they hung to his trail.

Nora, by a cut, had gained across a circle and was a little in advance of Adam, when suddenly a limb which she failed to notice caught her upon the body and swept her from the horse. Adam saw it with dismay, and began to dismount, but she screamed :

“Don’t! Keep on! I’m all right. Go on, I say, and beat him !”

And Adam went on, while she, considerably hurt but by no means helpless, caught her horse and rode slowly back to the starting-point, for she knew that the fox would probably make the circuit and return to its lair.

But it was no ordinary fox. It had been hunted before, and it knew that the price of its life was upon its head, and so it brought to its aid all the resources of its strategy and determined to give its pursuers a race that would tax their supreme energies. And it did. For hours it kept up the pace,

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increasing its circles and yet all the time working the smaller circles around the rim of the larger circumference that would bring it back to its home, where it might rush into the depths of earth and find safety in that etiquette of true sport which refuses to kill an animal when it has fairly won a hard race.

The sun passed the noon hour and began to lengthen the afternoon shadows. The hunters had gone many miles; their faces were scratched by briars and bruised by limbs; their bodies were sore from the hard riding, but they had clung on and followed the cry of the hounds as though their own lives depended upon it. Not a word did Adam and Paul speak to each other during the entire chase.

Then near sundown Nora, still waiting, heard the first faint echoes, and she knew the fox was leading them home. She stood on a knoll that commanded a slope of over a mile, across which were four fences and two ditches. Never was a place better fitted for a finish.

A hundred yards ahead was the fox, and the dogs seemed to be straining every bit of life within them, and they did not yelp so much, because they needed their breath for the race. Then on the horizon appeared the horses. Paul had caught up with Adam by a side path, and they were coming like mad, the

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two boys lying almost flat to break the resistance of the wind. Over the first fence both went without mishap, and then the ditch was cleared as though the horses had wings.

Now the stretch! Adam was whispering something to Tennie, and the little mare hung her head lower and seemed to understand. Yes, Adam makes the second fence first; he clears the second ditch beautifully; he increases his lead—yes, his dogs are also first; but there he comes, still gaining inch by inch. And the little cap comes off and the golden hair falls from its prison, and a girl jumps up and down, hallooing and cheering until the very hills take up the joy and send it echoing through the air.

What if the fox has made its hole? What if the hounds are growling and snapping in tumultuous chagrin and disappointment? Adam has won. His dogs have won. And that is happiness enough. Henceforth his name shall resound through Wheatley and his face shall shine in her dreams.

But this joy was in the hills—it reached no homes. Paul called his dogs and rode away without a word to either Nora or Adam, and that night the father who had given him everything which money could buy was forced to feel that he had failed because he

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could not make him victor in the race. And that led to deplorable consequences.

Adam tried to contain his satisfaction, but he could not help telling of his triumph with a liveliness that touched enthusiasm. Very soon he saw that his father and mother were not responsive to his mood. He wondered why, and quit talking.

"Adam," said the colonel, "you have not done a stroke of work on the farm to-day."

"But, father," he protested, faintly, all the fervor of his speech now gone, "I worked as long as you did yesterday, and——"

"Wasted all to-day after a fox which you did not get."

"But, father," protested the boy again, "I didn't intend to stay all day. I expected it to be over by dinner, but——"

"That is no excuse, my son, and I want to remind you that this has been going on too long."

The little mother said nothing. Adam stopped eating, and the supper was finished amid silence.

Colonel Rush took up his hat and went out, saying he might not be back until late. Adam tried to read, and his mother made fitful efforts at conversation, but she seemed too full of worry to continue. So they sat by the table and passed the time until the

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noise of Colonel Rush's return was heard. He appeared slightly flushed when he came in, and Mrs. Rush sighed one of her unspeakable regrets. The colonel's manner was more positive; he was evidently nerved for an unpleasant ordeal, and he spoke louder and quicker.

"I may as well tell you right now," he said, "I've sold Tennie, and you may as well know why I sold her. I must have the money, or the sheriff will be on us, and there has got to be more work and less fox-hunting on this farm, or we'll all be in the poor-house."

"Sold Tennie?" gasped Adam, as he arose. "Sold Tennie? Sold my horse? To whom?"

"She was my property, my son," said the colonel, weakening a little in his tone, "and I sold her to Weatherby, the store-keeper."

"Sold Tennie? Father, you don't—you can't mean it."

"She's sold, I tell you, and there's no use crying about it. Weatherby will be here for her to-morrow morning. He gave us two hundred dollars for her, and it would have been sinful to let such a price go by."

"Oh, father," exclaimed Adam, "if you'll only not do it, I'll work all day on the farm—I'll do anything for you—I'll——"

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"It's too late—too late. I've got part of the money in my pocket, and my advice to you is to go to bed and get a good night's sleep, so that you will be able to take things a little more sensibly to-morrow morning. I'm going anyhow. Good-night, mother. Good-night, Adam."

But there were no responses to his words. Adam sank down in the big arm-chair just in front of the open fireplace, and presently his mother drew near him and laid her hand upon his shoulder. He struggled bravely with his grief, biting his lips and choking down his sobs, but losing command inch by inch, until, his body trembling, he turned and threw his arms around her, exclaiming :

"Oh, mother!" Then the tears rained down and the sobs seemed to be the gasps of a broken heart.

She lifted her hand and caressed his brow, saying, "My boy, my poor boy!"

It soothed him, and presently he was able to say :

"Next to you, mother, I loved Tennie."

"Perhaps," she said, as if she really believed it, "we may be able to get her back, and surely Weatherby will take good care of her, and if he doesn't, Nora will see that she is not abused."

There was hope in this, but only enough to touch

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the edge of the deep wound. So he sat and pondered.

"Mother," he asked, "other people have money; why can't we have it?"

"I don't know," she said, and the Recording Angel is a mean bookkeeper if he charged the falsehood against her.

"I am strong; I can work; why can't I go off somewhere and earn enough? Mr. Salt did it. He went away from home when he was smaller than I am."

At last the fear had come in words—the fear she had always fought even in fancy—but now she would fight it as hard as she could by thought and persuasion and prayer; but, as will sometimes happen with the arguments of mothers, she admitted too much one way and tried to prove too much the other, with the result that the thing which had come to Adam's mind as a remote thought grew into a near and fascinating opportunity. She saw she was losing even when she pleaded hardest, and the final argument was the strongest woman can offer—tears.

"I don't want you to go," she said, and he pressed his arms the more tightly, as if he would not.

The fire fell and the chill increased. Midnight had gone long ago, and it was hours past the time

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for them to retire, but they sat there as if afraid to part—sat there until the weeping all disappeared and they were able to speak with sureness.

“Mother,” said Adam, “I expect to go away from the house early and stay until dark. I shall come back, but I simply cannot be here to see Tennie taken away. And I promise you to think over everything we have talked about, and then to tell you just how I want to do about—well, about things.”

More had happened after the fox-hunt that day than even Colonel Rush knew. When Paul Bradson visited his disappointment upon his father, Mr. Bradson was irritated beyond description.

“I’ve tried to give you everything to make you happy, but you have got the disposition of the devil himself. Now tell me what you want, and if money can get it you shall have it, and then quit bothering me.”

“I want Adam Rush’s horse.”

“Well, send down for Weatherby and tell him to come up here at once.”

Weatherby obeyed the summons, for Mr. Bradson was his best customer, and it was arranged that the horse should be bought—if she could be bought at all—through Weatherby, without the name of the real purchaser being mentioned.

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Colonel Rush did not know it until after the full price had been paid over and the horse had been delivered. Then he stood like one stunned. But it was too late for remonstrances or regrets.

He took the money and dropped it into Mrs. Rush's lap. "I don't feel like touching it," he said, and then he told her to whom Tennie had been sold. "I had not the slightest idea that it was for Bradson," he declared. "If I had known that——" He paused.

"I cannot see that it makes so very much difference," she said, "to whom you sold, if you took Tennie away from Adam at all."

"But to Bradson?" he exclaimed.

"Why do you dwell on that name?"

"Because—some day you may know—no, I don't mean that—I mean—oh, what's the use of talking any more about it. It's all over now."

Adam was making his way home about dusk when he met an acquaintance who questioned him about the sale of Tennie to Mr. Bradson. That is how he knew. He turned his steps to the woods again and walked with his thoughts and his doubts until the owls began to hoot. It was curious how the day of isolation and meditation had changed him. The boy's tears dried up and flew away. He faced

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the man's life. He felt that to remain on the farm would mean only unhappiness and poverty. What then? Was he fitted for the world? Could he make his way? He had strength, but how about his mind, untrained, undisciplined? And yet others with less personal capital had gone forth and found fortune. Mr. Salt had done it barefooted, and he at least had shoes. Newill was doing it. He knew them both, and he could walk to Chester.

It seemed clear, and he left the woods and the owls, which seemed to be telling him to get out of the country and go to work in town, and reached the house between ten and eleven o'clock. Strange to say, he had only a slight sense of hunger, but he decided to slip into the kitchen and get a piece of bread before going to his room. He tiptoed his way, and was about to close the door softly, when he espied his mother sitting by the blazing fire and watching the steaming kettle. Before he could speak she turned up the light and smilingly said:

"I expected you earlier, but I don't think the food has spoiled. Your father has gone to bed."

Her self-possession and calm voice helped him.

"Adam," she said, "I want to say one word about Tennie, and then we must not refer to the subject again. Your father did not know he was

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selling her to Mr. Bradson, and he was driven almost to desperation to get the two hundred dollars which she brought."

"I've quit thinking about Tennie," said Adam, "but I've been thinking a great deal about something else."

"Yes, I know; but eat first, and then we'll discuss it afterwards."

He persuaded her to let the things stay on the table after he had finished, and they went into the sitting-room and sat before the open fire, very close together, and his right hand holding her left.

"Mother," he said, "I've thought it all out and tried to look at it from every side and to decide just what I ought to do, and I can come to only one conclusion,—and you know what that is."

"Yes, Adam."

"And you must tell me what you think of it."

"It seemed so queer to-day," she said. "I did not feel that I was myself, but that you were thinking within me; your mind seemed to be my mind and your heart beat in my heart's place. As I walked around the house I was walking through the woods and I was looking through your eyes. It's been that way all day long, and from it has come a light which I had never seen before."

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"Oh, mother! then you are willing?"

"I don't know. I'm afraid I shall come to myself and things will look different, but to-day I've been gazing into the future through you, and somehow it does not seem so hard as it did last night to think of you going away; but yet it may be even harder than I can bear when I go. I feel like doing what you want to do and trusting the rest to God, and all the time I want to hold on to you, to have you with me, to——"

"Mother, I am going."

He placed his arm around her, and both lost their speech in the glow of the coals. But in a few minutes they talked again, and this time it was about probabilities—about what he might do and to whom he might go, and when he would start and how he would get there, for Chester, the county town, seemed to select itself as the place where he might try his fortunes. And finally it got down to advice:

"Adam, I want you to make me three promises: first, if you get into trouble or find that you need aid or advice, go to your employer; if he does not do, go to your pastor; and if he cannot help you——"

"I'll come to you."

He kissed her, and somehow the future did not

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look so black as it did the night before. Adam wanted to start the next morning, which would be Saturday, and he begged that he be allowed to go away without any one knowing just when he left.

It was late when they reached their rooms. By the lamplight Adam saw—to his surprise at first, and next with a smile—that his mother had spread his clothes near a satchel, and it took only a few minutes for him to pack them. He did not care to undress, and threw himself down for a little rest. He fell to sleep, but woke shortly before daybreak, completely refreshed by the nap.

“Now is my time,” he said, as he arose. He hated the thought of partings, with their tears and their bothers, their words and their fusses, and he especially wished to avoid an interview with his father; not that he harbored the bitterness, but because he did not wish to see him.

With his mother it was different. He tried to pass her door, but he could not do it. So he opened it slowly and creeping to the bedside leaned over and kissed her brow.

Very quickly two arms shot out from the bedclothes and encircled his neck, and to his greater astonishment a form fully dressed, even to the shoes, emerged from the bed.

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He had to laugh, in spite of himself; but she placed her finger on his lips, and led him on tiptoes to the door and down the stairs to the kitchen.

"No," she explained, "I had not been asleep at all. And you must remember that your brain is doing my thinking just now, and that you yourself told me—not in words, but in thought—that you were going to slip away without letting anybody know of it."

She made him wait for a cup of coffee, and she placed plenty of food in his satchel, and then she got her bonnet and they went forth together just as Wheatley was beginning to wake from its sleep. Psyche barked and ran up to them, very greatly mystified by their early movements.

And so hand in hand they proceeded to the lower gate and stood there in each other's embrace until each turned and walked away, for they could not speak, and they could see nothing but blinding mist in the clear morning air.

Then sharply in her mind came back the scene under the poplars—the scene of the mother robin pushing the birdling out of the nest. But it gave little help to her heavy heart.

VIII

TWENTY MILES TO CHESTER

SO, while the little mother, with a heart full of prayer, was trudging back up the lane, Adam faced the dawn and walked bravely on. At the bend of the road was a clearing, and she stopped between the two big trees, to catch a last glimpse. He paused and looked, as she knew he would, and raised his satchel and waved it, then he took off his hat and waved that, and placing the one on the ground and the other on his head, he threw kisses to her with both hands, and her handkerchief flapped in the air like a little sail that had been dipped in water.

So now the journey into an unknown world was really begun, and Adam walked with a lively step, as if responding to the crisp invitation of the beautiful morning and unafraid of the adventures that lay before him. As with many who ride much, he had a slight stoop—a physical bent which time and much walking were to correct—but excepting this his whole appearance was that of entire prepossession. His form had good height and was well knit; his

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manner was quick and confident; his action was clean and forward; he looked as if he was on a mission and was perfectly sure that he would arrive promptly at his destination. The favorable impression was strengthened by his face, for there was much of force and manliness in the strikingly regular features, whose normal paleness was well hid by the ruddy touches of sun and wind. There was a look of seriousness in the blue-gray eyes that made them show all the more impressively the purpose and tenacity that have shone from others like them ever since the Anglo-Saxon began to conquer the world. His nose was firm, generous, and inquisitive, his mouth full and positive, his forehead moderately high, of good breadth and smooth as marble, and his hair was a shade darker than light, as if turning towards the color of the horse-chestnut.

His clothes were of rustic cut, and his hat and shoes did not belong to the fashions of the day, but there was about him a genuineness of cleanliness and gentility that would discourage if it did not entirely estop personal criticism, even of the most frivolous kind. The satchel he carried was of black leather, much worn and of uncertain age. Altogether the young traveller had a right to the optimism that urged him on and made him greet the smiling day in

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its own cheerful mood ; and as the sunbeams turned the frost into dew and then drew it up to the heavens, so his orb of hope melted his recent disappointments and then cleared the tears from his eyes and the dampness from his cheeks.

The hound romped and jumped around him as if something unusual must be done in celebration of the early walk, and Adam began to laugh at the antics and to fall into the spirit of the play. Consequently when he reached Weatherby's store there was no trace of grief or of grieving about him.

"Why, Adam Rush!" exclaimed a silvery voice from an upper window. "What in the world are you doing out so early in the morning?"

"Walking," he replied. "Will you come down?"

"In a minute." And she was true to the word. "And carrying a satchel? Adam, what does this mean? Are you going away?"

"Yes."

"Where?"

"Chester."

"To stay?"

"I guess so."

"And leave—" she half said "me," but saved herself—"leave your folks—and your friends?"

He put down his satchel and they sat together on

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the bench under the little awning in front of the store—sat quite undisturbed, for Mr. Weatherby had not arisen.

“Yes,” he said, “I’m going. I don’t know what to do, but I’m going to make a try.”

“Oh, Adam, I—we’ll miss you so. Why do you do it?”

“Don’t you know?”

“Know what?”

“About Tennie?”

“Is she dead?” exclaimed the girl; and then seizing his arm, she pleaded, “Don’t tell me she’s dead.”

“Worse.”

“Oh, Adam, how can it be?”

“Sold—sold to Paul Bradson—and your father and my father did it.”

She could not believe the news. Mr. Weatherby had not mentioned a word of it, being a great secret, and she sat as if her powers of speech had been paralyzed.

“And you could not help it?” she said, at last.

“Oh, it’s all over now, and there’s no use talking about it. Of course, I’m sorry,” he said, bravely, and with a more serious air, “but I guess I should have had to leave Tennie some time. The thing that

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hurts is that I could not leave her to you to take care of for me; and, as I could not do that, I thought I'd bring Psyche and ask you to keep her just to remember me by, you know—just to make you think sometimes of the rides we have had and of a clod-hopper who liked you better than any other girl. You'll do it, won't you?"

"Yes, Adam, I'll——"

"Now, don't cry—please don't cry. I'm not worth it, and Psyche will be here to keep you more company than I ever could, and you'll take good care of her, I know you will."

He arose and declared he must be going, and she, made helpless by the suddenness of it all, could think of nothing to stay him except an invitation to breakfast, which he had already eaten. He extended his hand and took hers and shook it cordially, saying, "Good-by, Nora, good-by."

"Goo-goo-d-b-y," she repeated.

He called Psyche, and, stooping down, hugged the hound lovingly, as if parting from one very dear to his heart, which in good truth was the case.

"Nora will be good to you, and you must be obedient to her. Good-by, Nora. Good-by, Psyche." And with a wave of his hand he went on his way.

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Nora stood as one benumbed, but as he passed out of sight her hands went to her eyes and she boo-hooed as if her little heart was turned to a fountain of tears, and after awhile her words bubbled up with her grief.

"He's leaving m-m-e, and h-e-e h-h-ug-ug-ed th-e-e d-d-og." And for a few moments she felt like killing the beast. But that passed, and later she did something quite different—she hugged the dog too.

A mile farther along the way Adam saw a sight that chilled his blood. On the crest of the hill over which the road ran Tennie was clearly outlined, and there was Paul Bradson out for his first ride upon her. The mare sprang forward—evidently to the touch of spurs which she had never felt before—and raced down the slope, but as she neared Adam she recognized him and paused. Adam could not look at her longer. He hung his head and did not even return Paul's salutation; but the horse had not gone five yards beyond him when an irresistible temptation took possession of him.

There was little that a horse could know, little that a horse could do, that Adam had not taught to Tennie, and one of the familiar things was the signal for the leap or the jump. Adam had trained her so

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that when he placed his hand back and pressed it on her rump she would shoot promptly forward. The temptation was to call to Paul, who in order to turn would naturally throw his hand back to steady his body in its strained position.

And that is what Adam did.

And the results were just as Adam calculated. Tennie leaped like a catapult, and Mr. Paul Bradson slid off her back as neatly as though he had practised for it all his life, landing in the sand without injury, but so angry that his emotion choked his speech.

Tennie had never had matters to happen just in that way before and she soon stopped and looked around. Then she trotted towards Adam, neighing on the way. Adam had to wrestle with another temptation. But he did not wrestle long, for he jumped into the saddle and threw his satchel over the pommel and spoke softly to the horse.

"Get off of there!" shouted the irate Paul. "She's my horse. She doesn't belong to you any more. Get off, I say!"

Adam made Tennie canter playfully near Paul, and when he started to run towards them he kept her just far enough away to tantalize his temper to more acute exasperation.

"I'm going to ride Tennie to the top of the hill,"

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Adam informed Paul. "I'll tie her there, and you will find her all right. Good-by." And then there was a pretty run, as if Tennie knew how much it meant to her old master.

Paul shouted and stormed, but it did no good, and he had to foot the distance to the point where he found Adam had been true to his promise. By that time Adam was a good distance further on and Paul preferred not to follow him.

This little adventure seemed to do Adam a lot of good. It was hard to leave Tennie, but he was glad he got that last ride, for it seemed to appease the busy little devil within him who called for some kind of revenge. With such satisfaction he turned his thoughts to the future.

It was his own choosing that started him to Chester afoot instead of in a vehicle, but fate was determined to be kind, and he had walked less than six miles when a carriage overtook him and a gruff voice called out:

"Adam Rush, where are ye going?"

"To Chester, Mr. Wright," for Adam at once recognized the great victim to rheumatism.

"Well, crawl in here, and mind you don't touch that leg."

Possibly he might have declined, but before he

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could argue the matter with himself, he was obeying Mr. Wright's command.

"Got a satchel with you, eh? Ain't running away from home, are ye?"

"No, sir, not running away, but going away."

"Folks know it?"

"Yes, sir—that is, mother does."

"Uh-huh!" And Mr. Wright did some thinking, during which Adam felt uncomfortable, and was glad when Mr. Wright broke the silence.

"Of course," he said, "it is none of my business, and maybe I've no right to know about it, but I hope it's for the best. I think a great deal of you, my boy."

"I thank you, Mr. Wright. I value your good opinion, sir. There is no reason why I should make any secret to you of my going. My plan is to seek work—to do something—to get money. I am of little use on the farm; I may be able to do better in town."

"Uh-huh! Have you got a promise of a job?"

"No, sir."

"Do you know anybody to give you one—anybody to recommend you?"

"Not very well, sir."

"Uh-hugh!" This time the exclamation was

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deeper and more solemn. The case required consideration, and Mr. Wright brought his judicial qualities to bear upon it.

"That is," interrupted Adam, "I do know two men who I thought might help me a little—Mr. Salt, the merchant, and Mr. Newill, who used to teach our school. You remember him, sir, do you not?"

"Oh, yes." And he chuckled as he added, "Did you ever get that new slate?"

"Oh, yes, sir, and Mr. Newill and I became very good friends. I was sorry afterwards that I was so stubborn about the apology."

"Lord bless you, boy, that don't hurt. A little tiff between good men is a good thing. It takes fire and hammering, you know, to make rough iron worth anything much. I knew you two would get along."

Mr. Wright tapped the horse gently, and there was another short silence, disturbed only by slight rumblings which sounded like irreverent imprecations upon rheumatism. Adam presently asked that he be allowed to drive, so that Mr. Wright might make himself more comfortable, and this suited the old gentleman admirably.

A mile or two further on, Mr. Wright aroused from his meditations and said, "Adam, I've been thinking

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about you. I endorse your course, and I believe you will win. You've got health, and if you hurt it by bad habits it will be your own folly. Nobody can help you there but yourself. Take this horse. Turn him loose and he'd never go anywhere except to pasture and the feed-trough. Put him in harness and he becomes useful and earns his keeping. Now, you've been running pretty much as you pleased—I don't say wild, but pretty much as you pleased—and you're going to find it hard to stay in harness; harder than a horse, because you've got more intelligence and higher spirit; but, my boy, you'll never get anywhere if you begin by kicking over the traces. That's point number one. Now, what do you expect to do? What are you going to make of yourself?"

"I don't know, sir. I haven't thought enough of that part of it."

"Uh-huh! You don't know whether you'll be a plough-horse, a race-horse, or just a horse. Well, that's point number two. And you'd better lose no time in getting to it. The woods are chock full of people who want to do anything, and all the time men are seeking for boys and grown-ups who can do something. When you load your gun with mustard-seed shot you may bag a few sparrows and humming-birds, but you won't get a bear—it takes a rifle

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ball to do that. What I'm driving at is that as soon as you find what you most *want* to do, and are sure that it is the best thing for you *to* do, just make up your mind that it is the thing you *will* do. And don't balk because it seems impossible. The harder it looks the closer you stick."

There was something in the calm certainty of this old man's wisdom that nerved and stimulated Adam.

"Of course, Wheatley folks don't know much about Chester people, because they deal with Harton, and that's natural, because Harton is nearer by. I guess I'm about the only one who goes to Chester regularly, and I have to do that because I'm tax-collector. In some ways it's better for you to strike out in a place where they don't know you or your family. And Newill will help you some—he's a likely young man. As to Salt, he's not as big a fool as he talks; he knows how to make money. Perhaps I may help you with him. Anyhow, I'll tell you what I'll do; I'll stop in and say a word for you—that is, if you wish me to."

"Mr. Wright, it would be a very great kindness, and I would be obliged to you."

"No obligation, sir. Glad to do it, for, as I said before, I like you."

Mr. Wright closed his eyes and settled back for a

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little rest. They went along at a good steady pace, and in less than two hours were within two miles of Chester. The town was surrounded by a hilly country and the road dipped between banks, being occasionally intersected by other roads, which made dangerous crossings. Having finished his nap, Mr. Wright, more from force of habit than from any purpose, reached over and took the reins. He held them loosely, and thus was entirely unprepared for an emergency.

He did not hear the sound of wheels that were rapidly approaching the main thoroughfare from one of the side lanes, and evidently the other driver was oblivious of his presence in that immediate vicinity; and really it all happened so quickly that nobody knew who was to blame.

But a light wagon pulled by two spirited horses dashed down just as Mr. Wright's carriage reached the point where the lane entered the road, and, the high banks intervening, neither saw the other until the collision occurred. The right hind wheel of Mr. Wright's vehicle was wrenched off and the old gentleman tumbled back, with Adam and his satchel upon his rheumatic leg.

At first there was a howl, and then Mr. Wright began to use his vocabulary with a vigor that made

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the atmosphere blue and sulphurous. It would not be proper even to attempt to repeat his words here, but he said with burning expletives that the drivers of the other team were fools and knaves, and that he would make them suffer for their sins. Mixed with these observations were expressions suited to the partial alleviation of rheumatic pains, and ending, after Adam had quickly disentangled himself and grabbed the reins, in Mr. Wright turning to the wagon and shaking his fist. And then the fist came down as suddenly as it had gone up.

"Oh, Mr. Wright," exclaimed a strong, sweet voice, "I am so sorry, I am so sorry! Are you badly hurt?"

Adam did not have time to look at the owner of the voice just then, for he was getting out of the carriage and hastening to the head of the horse, so as to prevent further catastrophe. But when he did see her, he was deeply impressed.

"So it was you, was it!" exclaimed the irate old gentleman, his anger and pain moderating a bit. "What do you mean by driving over people in this way?"

She jumped from the wagon, leaving the reins in the hands of a man older than herself, and went to the side of Mr. Wright. "We did not hear you

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coming," she explained. "We had no idea that any one was near, and the horses slipped on the grade there."

She was tall and slender, with dark hair and eyes and a face that was stronger than it was beautiful. Her dress was plain but becoming and in the mode, and she looked like one who enjoyed a comfortable and independent life. There was grace in her movements, an air of self-possession in her pose.

In the mix-up and the investigation of the damage no one thought of introductions, but it was easily seen from his dress that the man in the wagon was a clergyman. In a few minutes he and Adam, having hitched the horses, were examining the broken wheel and seeing what could be done. The clergyman settled the programme.

"Miss Crawford," he said, "I think the best thing to do would be for you to take Mr. Wright in the wagon and leave this young man and myself to get the broken carriage to the blacksmith's shop. It is not very far, you know, and we can easily attend to it."

So Mr. Wright, with suppressed groans, was helped into the wagon, but before they started off, he said:

"I see you are a preacher, sir, and I merely wish to ask if you ever had the rheumatism?"

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"I have not had the misfortune," was the reply.

"Well, sir, that must be my apology for the language you probably heard a few minutes ago—language, sir, justified by the circumstances, but none the less to be regretted."

"It *was* shocking," interrupted the girl, "but it seemed to do you good." And she laughed gayly.

"We must consider it unspoken," said the clergyman, in the same mood. "And I hope, sir, that you will be able to forget both the words and the pains, under the care of Miss Crawford. She is a great one for making people forget their troubles."

"And a great one for running into innocent old men," added Mr. Wright.

But she told the horses to go on, and called back that she would take him home with her and see that he was made better than ever.

It was a simple problem to Adam to fix the carriage so that it could be pulled to the repairer's. With the help of the clergyman the wheel was lifted into the vehicle and a strong pole was tied on the body, so that while one end of it dragged on the ground it held up the carriage. The horse was placed back in the shafts and Adam took hold of the bridle and led it towards the town, the clergyman walking along with him.

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"I did not catch your name," said the latter.
"Mine is Norman Weir, and yours——"

"Is Adam Rush. I came from Wheatley, and Mr. Wright lives there too."

"Mr. Wright, I take it, is quite a positive character."

"Mr. Wright is one of our best men," declared Adam, stoutly. "He's a member of church, too," he added, as if to strengthen his fidelity to his friend.

The clergyman laughed in a fine hearty way, and Adam, seeing the point, laughed with him. And then conversation made the distance seem much shorter than it really was. Adam decided to remain until the repairs were made, and told Mr. Weir that there was no necessity for him to stay.

"To-morrow being Sunday, I am very busy to-day," said the clergyman, "and I came out this morning only to go with Miss Crawford to the bedside of a very sick woman. So, if you do not need me, I will return to my work. But I hope to see you again, sir, and if you are here to-morrow I should be glad to have you attend our services. You can easily find our church by that steeple," pointing to a tall spire. And with a handshake they parted.

It took the better part of two hours to straighten

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the axle and replace the wheel. Adam waited and saw that the work was thoroughly done. In the excitement and hurry of the accident and the incidents that followed nothing had been said about money to pay for the repairs, and Adam asked with much inside trembling the amount of the bill. It was two dollars. Then he breathed more freely, for he had a dollar more than that amount.

He inquired the way to Mr. Crawford's house, and had no difficulty in finding it. The stable-man took charge of the horse, and Adam asked him to send word to Mr. Wright. He first thought of going to the front door himself, but somehow he did not have the courage. Then, taking his satchel, he sought the main street of the town and walked slowly up and down watching other people at work and wondering what there was for him to do.

IX

A QUIET LODGING-PLACE

AS the afternoon lengthened the crowds increased. Mr. and Mrs. Everybody and their kith and kin came to town on Saturdays, the farmers with their produce and their politics, the wives in their black alpacos, their silk mitts, and their sombre bonnets, the girls with their bright ribbons and their giggles, and the young men, wearing high collars and driving their fastest horses—all glad to escape for a few hours from their rural isolations and happier yet to get back to the comforts of home. Adam had been to Horton several times, and had caught a few glimpses of the busier life, but this was his first visit to Chester, which was an older and larger place. While waiting for the repairs to the carriage he had partaken heartily of the food which his mother had placed in the satchel, and he was satisfied so far as hunger was concerned, but he could not help feeling the loneliness of his position and the uncertainties of his prospect.

In his doubt he went to the hotel and asked how

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much the charge for board and lodging until Monday would be.

"Two dollars," was the reply.

"How much for lodging for two nights?"

"Same price. Food will be here, whether you eat it or not."

That was deeply disappointing. The sole dollar left after paying the blacksmith seemed large enough for Wheatley, but it would not go far in Chester; still, there was no need to bother about that, for he would call later to see Mr. Wright, who, of course, would repay him. In the meanwhile he sought Salt's store, which was easier to find than it was to escape, for the agile merchant had decorated fences and the sides of old buildings with, "This Way for Salt's Store," with an impossible hand pointing the direction.

Adam noticed with a smile that the rule of ten held even in the road and street signs, and he dutifully followed its information, but the place was crowded, and after waiting an hour without being able to get near Mr. Salt, he went out and began to inquire the way to the home of Percy Newill. It was a long walk to the outskirts of the town, and Percy had gone away until Monday morning. Adam next decided that he would call to see Mr. Wright, and

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here was still another disappointment. Mr. Wright had hobbled off on the business that brought him to town, and no one knew where he was or when he would return.

Adam revisited Salt's store, and found it busier than ever. He then walked with no special aim or purpose towards the wharf; and he was glad he did so, for he could sit on the lumber pile, out of sight of the people, and satisfy his hunger, which had grown restive again. It was now getting towards evening, and his feelings were falling with the light. But he took up the satchel once more and proceeded to the Crawford house. He was told that Mr. Wright had left for home; and then he was clearly non-plussed, but he would try Salt's store a third time, which he did, only to be informed by a clerk that Mr. Salt had been called out by urgent business and would not be back until after eight o'clock.

"Well," said Adam to himself, as he took to the streets again, "it looks as though I had too much luck getting here, and I suppose I'll have to do my walking around the town. But wait a minute! That preacher seemed to be friendly, and he might be just the man to tell me about a lodging-place which would not take all my dollar." He looked around until he saw the steeple and then directed his steps towards it.

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Solomon Priddy, the sexton of St. Paul's, spent the afternoon of Saturday in fixing up the church for Sunday and in preaching sermons to himself and an imaginary congregation upon the follies of mankind and the moral topsy-turviness of the world. After going home for supper he would return and light up for the choir practising, and wait around awhile for no other reason than to continue his observations to the same audience.

"Now they're a-going home," he said, as some of the carriages rolled by. "Not in sich a hurry as they were to git here, 'cause they've spent their money and had their fun. Almost the same with the church. They come a-trottin' to the baptisms and the marriages, but it's a slow walk to the funerals. Only I wish they'd be as free in here as they are in the stores, and then a sexton might have a little more pay to praise the Lord on."

Members of the choir passed in with a cheery good-evening for Solomon Priddy, and the Rev. Mr. Weir came out from the study—which was in the church—to perpetrate his usual Saturday evening joke.

"Solomon, of course you'd like to remain to hear the practising, but it's better for a young fellow like you to go home early Saturday night. I'll lock up

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the church, and I hope you will be around to look after the fires, so that between us we may make it warm enough for them to-morrow."

And then Solomon repeated his usual Saturday evening reply: "Mr. Weir, I'm paid to stand that hollerin' on Sundays, but I want to say, sir, that if you keep on puttin' many more highfalutin' gimmeny-cranks to them old tunes, you'll have to raise my wages."

"You'll have your reward in heaven, Solomon," said Mr. Weir, as he went on into the church.

"There's just one consolation in that," said Solomon to himself—"the choir won't be there." And then he tarried a minute, listening to the various noises within, the chatter of the members, the vagrant notes of the organ, and the light laughter floating through the solemn place.

"That's praisin' the Lord," said Solomon, sadly. "If He sees everything—as I guess He does—I wonder what He thinks of a choir gossipin' and laughin' and the organist pullin' keys and all such goin's-on preparatory to givin' Him the tune the followin' day. It used to be that people got up and praised Him when they felt the sperit, but nowadays they have to practise a week or so and then dress up for the performance, as if the Lord was a circuit-rider who

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only got around on Sundays, and didn't stay very long then.—Good-evening, sir."

"This is St. Paul's church, I believe," interrupted a manly voice, and Solomon Priddy saw a tall young countryman, carrying a satchel. "Are services going on?"

"It's the church all right," replied Solomon, "but they ain't services exactly—just practices for the services."

Adam—for of course it was he—readily caught the droll humor of the old man and fell in with its spirit. "But they practise what they preach, do they not?"

"Oh, yes, I guess some do; and thank the Lord they don't try to practise what they sing, or some of them might be doing circus tricks. Just listen to that!"

A note rose and quivered and rose again and trilled and——

"I wanted to speak with Mr. Weir," said Adam. "Do you know where I might find him?"

"In there, but he's busy with the choir fixin' the Sunday music. Still, if it's a hurry you're in, I might tell him you are here."

"It is not so urgent as that. I can wait."

"They don't like anybody in the church proper

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while they're at it, but as I'm going home, and you're not pushed for time, there's no reason why you shouldn't sit up on that back seat in the gallery and wait for Mr. Weir. You'll be out of their sight and you can see him easy enough. Just come this way." And the old man led him to a comfortable pew and left him. The light was entirely in the front part of the church around the organ, and Adam, sitting in the shadow, could see without being seen. He was very comfortable, for the pew was cushioned, and he soon found that his wait was to be pleasantly spent, for he could hear much of the bright conversation, and he was vastly entertained by the differences of opinion which made the practice a merry race between harmony and discord, with Mr. Weir as the good-natured and successful peacemaker.

The tall young lady, who was always positive in her suggestions and interjections, he easily recognized as the driver of the morning who had wrecked Mr. Wright and then borne him off home in more or less triumph, and he could not help wishing that he had in his pocket the two dollars which the accident had cost. But the music was getting into some kind of form, the various notes and efforts and side-plays being summoned into line like a lot of wild urchins

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hauled into school for the roll-call. Adam enjoyed the results. He had known no good music in Wheatley, because it never got that far, and even when they sang badly and when they stopped in the middle of a high flight because they were not keeping together, he thought they were doing finely. And so it went on with infinite impatience and spasmodic babble until Mr. Weir said :

“Now, Miss Crawford, let us have your solo.”

She stood well in front of the organ, and the light streamed down so that Adam got a fine view of her. She looked much handsomer than she had in the morning. There was a rare femininity about her that appealed to Adam's impressionable soul, and he leaned forward so as to miss nothing. Holding her music down in one hand and gazing out upon the empty pews, she appeared as if she had a song to sing to hearts, and when she began, her clear, melodious voice not only interpreted the notes, but spoke the words as if they came to her spontaneously.

“I am far from my home

And I'm weary oftenwhile.”

It was as plain as a love-ditty, and it was sung in the simplest way imaginable, but it carried a dozen sermons and a whirl of impressions in its modest

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flight. To Adam it was more than a revelation ; it was as if she had seen him sitting in the gallery, and, knowing of his journey from Wheatley and his day's experiences, had talked to him in the words of an angel dressed in modern clothes—and he even forgot the clothes. When she had finished, the others said pleasant things.

“Very sweet, indeed,” exclaimed the preacher, summing up the final verdict, and Adam was personally hurt because he could not tell them all that their pretty little compliments were as far from the right praise as a tallow dip was from the stars. But they went to work on the other hymns, and presently they began to get tired and to beg off, and in this way the rehearsal died of its own weariness, and——

Solomon Priddy awoke at daybreak and realized that the air had sharpened during the night, and that a larger fire would be needed in St. Paul's. So he dressed and went to attend to it before breakfast. He proceeded to the cellar and fixed the furnace, and paused in the main body of the church to see about the ventilation. Solomon Priddy was a brave man, and he had served in the war with Mexico, but when he stood all alone in the deep silence of that sacred place and distinctly heard the sound of human

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breathing, he wished he were outside. At first he tried to convince himself that it was all imagination, but his ears refused to be persuaded. The next step was to locate the spot from which the noise came, and when he had done that he did not feel like going up to the gallery ; but duty was duty, and with a good stout stick he climbed the stairs. Cautiously he peeped over the rail, and then with a solemn laugh he shook the young man by the shoulders and called, in loud tones :

“ Haven’t ye seen Preacher Weir yet ? ”

Adam opened his eyes without getting fully awake, and at first he jumped as though he were being attacked, but when he saw the grinning face of the sexton, the big church, and the empty pews, he understood it all.

“ It’s quite a common thing for folks to go to sleep in here,” said Solomon, slowly and dryly, “ but *usually*,” putting a great stress on that word, “ they wake up when the sermon’s over.”

X

ADAM MEETS AN OLD FRIEND

SAMUEL SALT helped to take up the collection. The people from long acquaintance had ceased years before to smile at his curious figure and had learned to admire his stern dignity, for he passed the plate with a solemnity that encouraged generosity and rebuked worldly thoughts. His acute and experienced hearing could differentiate the rings of copper, nickel, and silver, and tell the fall of the note almost with the certainty of omniscience. His attitude was propriety itself, for as he handed the plate to be passed along the pew he partly turned and elevated his eyes, as if to show that he was not keeping tab on the contributions, but the boy who did not drop in his penny or the member who did not give according to his means never escaped his alert intelligence. He knew the facts, even if he never told.

But on this particular Sunday Mr. Salt behaved differently, and the congregation noticed the change. He looked directly into each pew and let his eyes go searchingly over the rows of worshippers. And he

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kept doing this until he reached his side of the gallery, when suddenly his face lighted up and he resumed his usual self-absorption. The services went on, and, contrary to his usual habit, which was to remain and shake hands with the preacher and the people who stayed for the little social reunion which followed the benediction, he hurried down the aisle and took his stand at the door. In a few minutes his face beamed and he made his way to the young stranger who was threading his way through the crowd, and before Adam could recognize the man who had taken his arm, he heard a friendly voice saying:

"How do you do, Mr. Adam Rush, Jr.? I've been looking and waiting for you, and now that I have you, I'm going to keep hold of you."

"Why, Mr. Salt, this is a surprise, and I'm very glad, indeed, to see you."

"You must come right along with me," declared Mr. Salt, "for dinner is waiting, and the parson has sharpened our appetites by that loaves and fishes sermon. There's nothing that makes a man hungry like talking about something to eat. How did you like the discourse?"

"I thought it excellent."

"Yes, it was. Weir's all right, but he needs time ;

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and once I began to think that he'd get all that bread into crumbs; and as to the fish—well, it must have been either shad or herring, judging from the number of bones he picked." Mr. Weir, it may be stated, had gone through the pros and cons of miracles. "For myself I don't believe in trying to argue a miracle any more than I do trying to catch a fog with a fish-net, or any other thing that's beyond us. You've got to take such as that on faith, and—well, I certainly am glad to get hold of you. How is it you did not come to me yesterday?"

Adam told him of his various visits and of missing Mr. Wright, but he said nothing about the long sleep in the church; and Solomon Priddy had not only promised to keep it a secret, but had taken care of the satchel, so that Adam could attend church unencumbered.

"Wright came to see me," said Mr. Salt, "and left the two dollars to pay for the blacksmith's work. Pretty bad collision, wasn't it?"

"Well, it was not very pleasant, but the young lady could not help it. It was a pure accident."

"Fine girl, Constance Crawford. You heard her sing, of course. Did it well, didn't she?"

"I never heard better music," declared Adam. "It was beautiful, but it made me a bit homesick."

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"Oh, yes, something about being away from home, wasn't it? I remember now. Generally I take the music without bothering with the words, like I used to eat pie, you know—gobbled the fancy part and left the crust. Yes, Miss Constance comes from good stock and shows it. Her father is Charles Boyd Crawford, the tall man you saw—he's over six feet—and there isn't a finer gentleman this side of Jordan. Mother died when she was a baby, and now, young as she is, she rules the home and runs a big part of the church, and makes Preacher Weir earn his salary. Some people can work, some can make others work, and some can do both, and she's all three, with a little extra when there's a picnic or a festival. Well, here's my lonely hut, and you just walk right in and take as much of it as you want."

Adam entered, little thinking that it was to become his home. Mr. Salt led up to that decision by much skilful prattle, sounding the young man from every point he could think of, and at last asking him directly what he thought he could do, and when he would like to begin doing it.

"It is a very plain case, Mr. Salt," he replied. "I am looking for work. I realize that I have no special training, that my education is deficient, and

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that I do not know town or city ways. I have come from a place where, so far as I can see, there is no future for me, to seek a place where I may find a career. I have good health and I am willing to work hard. I hope by diligence and by being faithful to the interests of the man or house that employs me to do better all the time and thus to win my way."

"Have you any recommendations from your neighbors?"

"No, sir, I have not. I did not think of getting them, and I really do not see how they could help much, beyond saying I am honest, which I think I am—although," and here he smiled at Mr. Salt, "there isn't much down in Wheatley to tempt a person to be anything else."

"No man knows whether he is honest or not until he is tempted," declared Mr. Salt, largely because it was a favorite phrase which he never missed saying if an opportunity came. "Would you like to run the risk?"

"I am not in a hurry, but I don't think I should be afraid."

"If it wasn't too big a one, eh? But that is all right. You'll get to that soon enough. What I want to tell you now is that you have already been recom-

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mended. Yes, you needn't look surprised, it's so. Jonas Wright spoke the right word for you, and he seemed to think that I might do the rest. And I'm going to try to do it, my boy. If you mean what you say and are willing to work hard and long, and take small pay to begin with, why I'll make a place for you in Salt's store, and I want you to live right here with me until we find out whether or not we can get along together."

"It seems too good to be true," said Adam, gratefully.

"Well, you'll see after you get into it. But mercy me! here we are talking business on Sunday. We oughtn't to do that. So let's consider the thing postponed until to-morrow morning at six—we open at six."

Mr. Salt busied himself with the dinner, and, having swallowed several big mouthfuls, went on: "At the same time, there's no harm in talking business principles on the Lord's Day—not that I know of, at any rate. And maybe there is something in my experience of value to you. Young men who get along must first be willing to learn. Point number one. There's no hope this side of the grave for the person who knows it all, and on the other side the devil don't want him and the Lord won't have him. He

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must be prompt to get to work and slow to leave it. Point number two. A merchant always watches the clerk who watches the clock, and a fellow who quits a job before he is through with it soon has no job to quit. Courtesy is absolutely necessary. Point number three. Sugar draws flies and politeness brings customers; but don't overdo it, for too much sweetness is worse than the measles. Then a young man who really wants to get along must do some thinking, not only for himself but for the man who hires him. Point number four. The fellow whose place you are going to take has an idea that I am paying wages for his legs and his black moustache, but I guess he'll find out his mistake. And last, but not least, take good care of yourself and of your associations. Point number five. A young man, especially a stranger, makes up the general estimate of himself, and if he dresses badly or does not keep his clothes neat, or runs with questionable company, he finds out soon enough that he's got a big task on hand if he ever wants to climb into public respect. Now, don't think I'm going to preach to you. The sermon is over and you won't hear it again, and I feel that we're going to get along very well together."

Adam slipped around to Solomon Priddy's in the afternoon and secured his satchel, and so easily did

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he manage it that Mr. Salt asked no questions. He felt a sense of relief when it was all over. There was an excellent supper, and Mr. Salt and he went to the evening service, where they heard a good sermon and more singing.

"I don't think the preachers do exactly right," said Mr. Salt on the way home. "They preach the long sermons in the morning and the short ones at night. They ought to turn that around. For why? Simply because people don't need to go to sleep in the morning, but at night it would be a real favor to get them ready for bed."

But Adam had no fault to find with the order. He slept that night so soundly that he was afraid that it was past six o'clock when he awoke.

XI

SOME INTERESTING BEGINNINGS

ADAM'S dreams were not more confused than his awakenings. The life into which he now entered had many difficulties which had never before come into his experience.

"My principle," said Mr. Salt, "is to catch the early man as he starts to work and the late man when he goes back home. It stretches the hours, but it gets the dollars."

So Adam's day lasted practically from six in the morning until nine or after at night. There were many things for him to learn, and it was all so different from what he had known in his previous life. He knew the open field, the fine, full life of the country, the company of horses and dogs, the songs of the birds, and the changes of the seasons. He could tell the months by the trees, the fruits, and the flowers, and there were things in the sky whose meaning was clear to him even though he was not an astronomer.

Mr. Salt did everything he could to make the

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young man feel at home, but particularly to put him in close touch with his new duties and responsibilities. He assumed from the first a confidential demeanor, and solved a difficult problem by not postponing it. In this case it was Adam's clothes. Those he wore were neat but rural.

"My boy," said the merchant, "I am going to say something now that you must take in the spirit it is said. Your clothes are all right for Wheatley, but they won't do for Chester. A young man should dress well, even if he has to spend his last dollar on his outfit, even if he has to starve a bit, for people can't see his empty stomach, but they can always see the patches, the old collar, and the places where the buttons used to be. If I should strike a new town with a five-dollar note and a big appetite, and needed sprucing up, I'd let the appetite go and put the cash into clothes, for I know pretty well that before sundown I'd be making enough to guarantee three square meals the next day."

Mr. Salt talked along good naturedly in this strain, and the result was that one of the best suits of clothes in the establishment was charged to Adam's account.

In a country store there are more things to do than there are goods to sell, and it was natural that Adam should be perplexed, but it was astonishing how well

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he got along. The problem that exercised him the most was the system, the details of weighing, of measuring, of making change, and of the various mathematical operations necessary in the work. He was fortunate in starting in on Monday, for it was a dull day, and he had time to learn much of the routine under the babbling tutorship of his new employer.

In the afternoon he wrote a short letter to his mother, and then, while Mr. Salt was absent and the store was quiet, his thoughts wandered back to his old home twenty miles away. He thought of his father, and was sorry for what had happened. Tears almost came to his eyes when a vision of Tennie and the dog flew past in his memories. Then he wondered what Nora was doing, and somehow her golden hair got mixed in the sunlight that streamed through the windows. Perhaps he would never see her again. Perhaps, now that he was gone, Paul Bradson would hold her hand when the stars looked down and ride with her in the long afternoons.

What would become of him in Chester? Somehow the work did not appeal to him, and the days seemed never to end. If it should go on in this way, how would he get to know people? How would he really make any mark in life? But—and here fancy

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settled down on fact—he had a position, his employer was friendly, and what more could he reasonably expect?

Chester seemed a great place to Adam, although it was only a good-sized county town, somewhat old-fashioned in its ways and architecture, and not given to the rush of modern civilization. But it was near the beginning of important changes. Its position was along the route of what was to become a great railroad system. It was connected with the business world by a short and leisurely line which had its terminus within its limits.

The time was in the years when States, counties, and cities were rushing towards financial folly by voting large loans and endorsements to transportation enterprises—to railroads and canals; when even the national government itself was getting deeper and deeper into losses from which private thieves reaped their millions. The craze was everywhere. There was no section, however poor or tax-ridden, that could not be made rich and happy by a new railroad. The improved facilities and the quick access to markets were to make farms a hundred per cent. more valuable, were to double the populations of towns, were to enrich the cities beyond the dreams of their most enthusiastic statisticians. In after years,

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when the interest accumulated and the principal became due, these communities and divisions of territory saw their mistakes—but not then, for the people were being fed upon the exhilarating literature which goes with booms as naturally as wine with the feast.

Still, Adam knew little of this in the beginning. He was to hear more of it as time passed.

Adam's letter was due in Wheatley on Tuesday, and long before the time for its arrival Colonel Rush started for the post-office.

Half-way down the road the colonel and Mr. Bradson came face to face. Bradson spoke first:

"Colonel Rush, I would like to have a few words with you," he said.

"The fewer the better," replied Colonel Rush.

"I'm sorry to hear you say that. The past is very long gone; we are neighbors, and I don't see why we cannot become friendly, especially as I have a proposition to make that will greatly relieve your circumstances."

"I do not see that my circumstances are any of your concern."

"Well, we'll let that pass, and I beg your pardon if I have said anything to offend. The point is this: when the old moss-backs around here defeated the

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railroad project, you were against them. You were on our side."

Colonel Rush started to speak, but his curiosity stopped his words, and he met this statement with a look of inquiry.

"Now, we are going to get that railroad through this valley, and we are going to take care of those who help us do it. First of all we want a legislative delegation that will be favorable to the enterprise, and most of all we want you to head the ticket. It makes no odds what our past differences have been; this is a matter of the present and of the future, and as your convictions lay along the lines of our plans I do not see why you should not act with us."

Curiosity still mastered the colonel. "But my party is in the minority in this county, and I have neither the time nor the money to make the sacrifices that a campaign would cost."

Mr. Bradson laughed a little. "Oh, don't let that bother you. We'll see that the ticket wins."

"Now I understand," said Colonel Rush, deliberately. "It was not exactly clear to me at first. I favored the road because I believed it desirable and wise. Now you propose to put me on a ticket, buy my election, and then use me. I am not in the market for such as you, and if you ever bother me

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again I'll thrash you within an inch of your life. Get out of my way!" And as the colonel took a fresh grasp on his stick, Mr. Bradson jumped to one side and almost ran up the road, while the colonel muttered, "The coward, the rich, dastardly coward. Why didn't I hit him?"

At the store Colonel Rush saw Nora. She spoke to him deferentially, and her brightness and beauty brought a partial reaction in his mind.

"How do you and Psyche get along?" he asked.

"Oh, Colonel Rush, I think he is like all of us—we miss Adam so."

"Yes, we miss him."

"Are you waiting for the mail?"

"Yes."

"I told Mrs. Rush I would carry it to her just as soon as it came."

"That's nice of you. But I'll wait."

The hour and a half dragged along pitifully—even Psyche seemed to be expecting a letter. But finally the old post-rider hove in sight, and the turbulent anticipations became calm. There was a big pile of letters for Mr. Bradson; there was only one other, and it was for Mrs. Adam Rush.

Colonel Rush gulped something down his throat and, handing the letter to Nora, said, "You may take

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it to her. You can make the distance much more quickly upon your horse."

Nora leaped into the saddle, gave her horse a touch of the whip, and galloped off, leaving Colonel Rush sitting on the bench a picture of disappointment.

Mrs. Rush was waiting—waiting at the lower gate—and she smiled as she saw the galloping horse and the cloud of dust, because she knew that the letter was coming. Nora jumped from the saddle without a word and ran to Mrs. Rush with the precious missive.

Mrs. Rush tore open the envelope quickly, while Nora gazed at her, hungry for a word.

"Adam is well," said Mrs. Rush, calmly, "and he has been very fortunate. He has a place in Mr. Salt's store, and he has already met some very nice people, and he thinks he will like Chester very much."

Nora's heart fell.

"Did he—did he send any messages to—to——?"

"Oh, yes," said Mrs. Rush, "he sends love to all, and asks me to tell Nora to take good care of Psyche."

Take good care of Psyche! What was a dog to a heart? She could not get away from Mrs. Rush quickly enough.

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At home she did one thing and another until she found herself sitting at her window, pen in hand. The processes had gone on and on in her mind until reason had got in a word, and then she convinced herself that Adam had been so busy that he did not have time to write more than one letter. He had not written to his father, and she certainly might give him a day or two longer to write to her, and perhaps he was expecting her to write first.

But her heart still clung to its reservations. She threw away the sheet with "Dear Adam" on it, and after a second period of thought another sheet with "My dear Friend" joined it on the floor. She tried, "Dear Sir," and sent that flying; "Mr. Adam Rush," and discarded that; and finally she abandoned anything of the kind and started forth upon her letter:

"I was very glad to hear from your mother that you were well and that you had got a nice place in Salt's store. I hope you will get along very successfully and that you may make as much money as Mr. Salt or Mr. Bradson. I expect you want to know what is going on in Wheatley, and I don't think your father and Mr. Bradson are very good friends. I don't like Mr. Bradson, and I don't like Paul Bradson either, but as long as you have gone away and he keeps coming around it's hard to get rid of him. Of course, you have met a lot of pretty girls in Chester, who have fine clothes and manners, but I am taking the best care I can of Psyche, and you don't know how

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I am getting to love the dog. We all miss you more than words can tell, but of course you don't miss us—I mean, you don't miss anybody except your mother and father—and I think your father was very much disappointed in not getting a letter, and I certainly did sympathize with him. No more at present from

“HONA WEATHERBY.

“P.S.—You once said Honora was too long, so I have decided to sign myself Hona.

“P.S.—The mails leave Chester for Wheatley at seven o'clock in the morning. If you want to be sure of getting a letter in, the best way is to mail it the night before.

“P.S.—Paul Bradson has come, but he'll just have to wait until I finish this letter to you. I think his father is with him, but I don't know what for.”

After Mr. Bradson left Colonel Rush he hastened home and walked up and down his working den. Presently he stood at the window and laughed sardonically.

“Well, well, well,” he said. “To think that Paul Bradson should be a fool. All the other things—they can pass—but to be a fool. I must be getting old—but, no, I'm not,” repeating the contradiction to soothe his feelings. “I never needed Rush. I wouldn't touch him with a forty-foot pole. The man I want is Weatherby—Weatherby is my man.”

Yes, he was sure of it now, and Weatherby was his

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man. But Weatherby must not know all—just enough to keep him on the right track—and Bradson would begin upon him at once.

Father and son did not go to the store together. Mr. Bradson found the boy there before him.

"It's a beautiful night, Weatherby," said Mr. Bradson, "and I feel like a little walk. Come with me."

They walked along, speaking of different things of no consequence until Mr. Bradson asked, somewhat ingeniously :

"When that fight on the railroad was made here, you kept pretty well on both sides, didn't you?"

"It was this way, Mr. Bradson," said Weatherby, with a laugh. "You see, I keep a store."

Mr. Bradson laughed in return, as he said, "Business is business, eh?"

"Every time."

"But I don't see that you're getting rich here."

"It's hard to make both ends meet, as the dog said when he tried to catch his tail."

"So I thought. Now, as I understand it, you are not really opposed to the railroad?"

"Between you and me, I'm for it; but, you see, in addition to the other things, Silas Wright had a mortgage on my store then."

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"Ah, I see. Here's a comfortable-looking log; let's sit down." After they had done so, Mr. Bradson proceeded: "Weatherby, I've taken a great liking to you, and I hate to see a man of your parts struggling along without the right sort of reward. You'll never make anything or amount to anything as long as you keep that little store. You've got a very lovely daughter—you want to do the best by her as well as something for yourself. Now, I am taking you very far into my confidence, because you can help me and I can help you. We're going to build that line through Wheatley all the way to Chester. Nothing can stop us, but of course we want as little trouble as possible. First we must have the whole delegation to the Legislature solidly for the road, for the Legislature must pass the enabling act and grant the power by which the question of endorsing the few thousands of help we may need from the county may be submitted to the vote of the people. It is a simple matter, but we must be sure of our men. Any mistake might mean a delay of two years, and I'm tired of waiting."

"I don't exactly see where I come in," said Weatherby.

"You must take the nomination for the Legislature."

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There was a slight pause, and Mr. Bradson went on: "Of course, taking the nomination is not all. I want you to go over the county pretty well and pick out the men who would be most dependable for us. If it's a matter of money I'll see that they get it—money for their campaign expenses of course—or, if they want other favors that are reasonable, we may manage it so that they will get them."

"But," said the careful Weatherby, "after this is over what becomes of me then? I've watched these legislators, and their prosperity doesn't last long."

"I've thought of that. After we get the law passed we'll have the contest on the bond issue, and we'll need you more than ever. My idea is that after you're elected you'll move to Chester."

"I don't think I could ask anything better," said Weatherby.

"I know you couldn't. It's an opportunity that comes only once in even a lucky man's lifetime. And hereafter, whenever you want money, come to me. Don't make a display of it, though; and put on a poor mouth worse than ever to Silas Wright. This thing to be done well must be done quietly."

"I understand," said Weatherby.

They shook hands upon their compact, and both said very little as they returned to the store.

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Young Paul was just taking his leave, and father and son went home together.

"How do you and Honora get along?" asked the father.

"Oh, she's no good," exclaimed the youth. "Just because she's pretty, she thinks she can jump all over a fellow."

"My boy, they're all alike," said Mr. Bradson, somewhat kindly; "all alike, until they are harnessed and broken. What you need is simple persistence and patience. You will win in time."

"But she's always flinging up that Adam Rush."

"He doesn't belong to your class, my boy."

Honora had not waited for the little group in front of the store to separate, but had rushed to the box in which the outgoing mail was deposited and had taken her letter. She fled to her room up-stairs and opened the envelope, and in the two lines remaining added:

"Last P.S.—Paul Bradson has just gone, and I'm glad of it, and I hope he will never come back here any more. I don't like him.

"HON^A."

"Well, my boy," said Mr. Salt, airily, at supper Wednesday evening, "we've been together now three

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whole days, and I haven't once asked you how you like it. And furthermore, I'm not going to now."

Adam fell into the spirit of the question and replied, "Well, Mr. Salt, I've been in your employ three days, and I haven't asked you yet how you like me. And, of course, I shall not do so, now."

"You've heard the old saying, I guess," said Mr. Salt: "'Some men are born rich, some achieve riches, and some are Yankees,' or words to that effect. We'll play Yankee, and say we're getting along."

"Yes, I think we're getting along," said Adam.

"I feel pretty sure about you, because you're a country boy. For why? Simply because the country boy is storing up the strength and sense, while the town or city boy is throwing both away. The country boy goes to bed early, has good sleep and pure air; he eats plain food; his nerves are not wrecked, and he drinks spring-water—oh, the country boy is the boy that does things in this world. I'm a country boy myself. My idea of improving the population would be to turn all town and city people out to grass about every ten years."

Mr. Salt paused, and then went on: "And that reminds me. I don't want you to feel that you must stay around with me all the time, for if you do we

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may become like Lizzie Riggles in regard to her husband Sam. Didn't I ever tell you the story? Thought I had. Sam had a paralyzed leg, and had to stay home for going on ten years, and Lizzie had him all of that time, every blessed minute of it. But after a while Sam died. Then after that something got the matter with Lizzie, and she went to the hospital. Doctors said she'd have to be operated on or die. She said she'd rather die. Then a minister was called in. 'Dear Sister,' he said, 'you may soon join your beloved in another world.' She looked up scared-like and asked, 'Do you mean Sam?' He said, 'Your beloved husband.' Then she beckoned to the surgeons and called out, 'Go ahead with your cuttin'.'"

Adam laughed and said, "I've thought of that, but to-night I've some letters to write, and then I'll take them round to the post-office and get a good airing. And I almost forgot to tell you, Mr. Salt, that mother sent you her kindest regards."

"Thank you! thank you very much. And the other letter—I guess old bowlegs did not get mentioned in that."

Adam smiled and his face flushed.

"There, there, my boy, I was only teasing. But I hope it won't turn out like it did with the girl I used

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to correspond with—the first and only love experience I ever had. We hit on the same ‘*Lover’s Hand-book of Letters*,’ and when we both found it out we sent the numbers on postal-cards—saved a lot of time, and did just as well—and it all went right along until she replied with 217, that covered the whole card. I hunted it up and began to read, ‘Owing to the fact that I am soon to be married——’ I didn’t get any farther, for I threw the book in the stove. But I always did think that she might have made those figures a little smaller.”

Adam wrote his two letters—one to his mother and one to “Dear Hona.” On his way he had to pass the hotel. As he drew near the group around the sycamore-tree he heard a strong, assertive, conclusive voice say:

“You fellows think you did some fighting in the Civil War, but all the yarns you have told don’t equal some of the experiences we had down in Mexico. One especially—the bravest thing I ever saw in all my life.”

Adam could not resist the general curiosity. He paused to hear the story.

“When we got up with the Mexicans,” the speaker said, “there was some queer work to be done. Some of their places had approaches of walls—high

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walls—and some of these walls were almost like steps, the tops being of different heights. Well, a fool thought he could get all the way over, but a bullet knocked him down, and he lay on the lower side, trying the 'possum act on the Gringos. But they knew better, and they rushed to finish him. Just then the man I speak of ran up from our side, and just before he got to the top five Mexicans popped up ready to kill the 'possum. What did that darn American do? He hadn't time to shoot the whole five, but quicker than a muskrat's wink he took hold of his gun by the barrel end and with a mighty swing bowled over every mother's son of them. Then he took his pistol and the 'possum's pistol, and stood there and fired right into the crowd below. The 'possum tried to move, tried to sit up, but he slammed him back on the stone and said, 'Stay dead, you fool;' and when they tried to rush again he picked up a lot of stones and let them go as though he were a catapult. In a few minutes reinforcements were seen, and he grabbed the 'possum and ran down the slope and carried him all the way to the surgeon. There he put him on the ground and returned to the front to fight harder than ever. That's a gospel truth story, for I was the 'possum, and the man is still living in this county, down

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Wheatley way. His name is Adam Rush, and if you ever want to find a brave man, go look him up."

Young Adam slipped away from the crowd and stood behind the tree to think. His father had never told him much about his army career, and in the little he had said there was nothing of what he himself had done. A curious revulsion of feeling came into the young man's thoughts. He had been sorry that he had not bade good-by to his father, but he thought it would readjust itself, and to write about it was one of the things he wanted to postpone as long as possible. But now the desire was upon him, and he returned to his room. He wrote :

"DEAR FATHER: I am very sorry that I came away without saying good-by to you. I want to tell you that I think everything has happened for the best. I shall try to make something of myself here, and I am extremely fortunate in getting a start so soon. Mr. Salt is kindness itself, thanks to you, whom he thinks much of. I hope when you can you will come to town to see me and bring mother if possible. With love, I am,

"Your affectionate son,

"ADAM RUSH, JR."

As Adam turned from the post-office door, having dropped the letters through the slit therein, he saw a middle-aged man walking unsteadily towards him.

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When he came nearer he saw that it was Major Wilberforce Scott, and that he needed assistance.

"Major Scott," he said, "allow me to walk with you." And he took the arm of the veteran, who seemed grateful for the support.

"Young man," he asked, "do you drink?"

"No," replied Adam; "that is, I have tasted wine, but not much."

"Well, don't begin. Stop where you are. Wine is a mocker, strong drink is raging—raging—yes, raging."

"Perhaps you'll feel better in the morning," suggested the young man.

"Now, I know you don't drink. Better in the morning? Ha, ha! Better in the morning? Oh, the shim—the splix—the issues—the——" The major steadied himself and tried to get a hold on his vocabulary, and added, "I was 'bout t'r'mark on the simplixississ——"

"The simplicity," helped Adam.

"That's it. Thank you! The shim—you know what it is—of innocence. That's it. That's it. I knew I'd get it. St—stay that way, my boy—stay that way. What's your name?"

"Adam Rush."

"Adam Rush!" The veteran stopped and tried to

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recognize the young man in the moonlight. "Where from?"

"Wheatley."

"Kin to Adam Rush there?"

"He is my father."

A wave of firmer confidence swept through the old man—the man old before his time. For the next minute or two he said nothing, but walked more confidently. He seemed to be gathering all his resources; when he spoke again there was a bettering in his voice.

"I think I can get home all right now," he said.

"But I do not intend to leave you," replied Adam.

"Just like his father; just like his father," muttered the major so that Adam heard. "Up there on the wall, I told Ad—we called him Ad—to save his own life. 'I do not intend to leave you,' said Ad, and he wouldn't leave me either. I didn't tell the boys that part of the story. And it was the best part, too."

By the time they reached the room the reaction in the mind and bearing of the major had become pronounced, and he had—temporarily, at least—conquered his uncertainty. Adam lighted the lamp and the major gazed at him as one risen from the dead.

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"Adam Rush—the same Adam that went to the war. Young man, is it true?"

"It is quite true," said Adam, smiling, "that I am the son of the Adam Rush that went to the war."

"I am his friend. I am your friend. When Wilberforce Scott says that he means it. Remember that. I am your friend."

"I thank you. Now, if you think you are all right, I will go."

"All right, all right. But have something before you go—have something—no! don't touch it. Don't ever touch it. I'm your friend, and I'll—no, don't touch it—I'm your friend—I'm——" But Adam was closing the door and leaving the major to himself.

XII

A HUNT IN THE DARK

A COUNTRY boy in a county town is more lost than a town boy in a big city. In a city nobody cares for the town boy. In a town everybody takes some sort of interest in the country boy, and the country boy knows it.

It seemed to Adam that they were all very civil. There was another clerk in the store—a rather grand young man, whose black hair, so securely pasted in immovable waves over his low forehead, was a matter of much perplexity to Adam. He was Mr. Salt's extra help. He came in later than the others, and had his hours for meals clearly defined. He was very strait in his manner, very didactic in his speech, very certain in his arguments with the customers.

"C. Coleman Jones," said Mr. Salt, "is a good deal of a peacock—his feathers are brighter than his brains; but it is well to have such as him around, and he can look prettier on a small salary than any man I know of. I wouldn't trust him as I'm going to trust you, Adam, but that does not mean that I

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don't appreciate his usefulness. A peacock isn't much use around the farm-house, but he adds a little to the looks of things, and C. Coleman can part his hair in the middle with the best of them."

But C. Coleman Jones did not particularly admire Adam, although he condescended to introduce him to a few of his friends, who, being something like C. Coleman, did not gain any great admiration from the young man from Wheatley.

Newill was among the first to welcome Adam, and he was very glad to see him and to spend an evening at his home. Newill had become a lawyer and was depending largely on prospects, which he pictured to Adam in fine language. Then Major Scott came around and had a talk with Adam, and Mr. Weir called in and invited him to attend his church regularly, with a special invitation to the Sunday-school.

Adam decided to go to Sunday-school, although he was told that it was not the custom of the young men of his age to do so—they have become too manly for that. But he went. He found Mr. Weir and Miss Crawford conducting the exercises, and, as there was a scarcity of teachers, Mr. Weir asked him if he would take a class. Adam laughed and shook his head. Then Mr. Weir put him in the class taught by Miss Constance Crawford.

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He was a silent pupil, but he greatly admired her earnestness and her knowledge of the lesson. When the exercises were over she detained him. Holding out her hand, she said :

“I am very glad to welcome you here, and I hope you will become one of our workers. So many of the young men give up Sunday-school. I do not know why, but they do. You won’t, will you?”

“I really do not know,” replied Adam. “You see, this is the first time I have ever been to Sunday-school, and I may not be able to say just what I shall want to do.”

“But you must,” she insisted. “Mr. Weir and I will need you, and you can do so much good here.”

“Certainly he will come, if only to get into your class,” interjected Mr. Weir, who was standing near talking to others.

Adam was distinctly uncomfortable—just why he did not know—but he thanked them both and bowed himself away as soon as he could.

“We must get hold of that young man,” said Mr. Weir to Miss Crawford.

“Yes, we must get hold of him and keep hold of him,” replied the young woman.

Monday, the next day, C. Coleman Jones was more cordial towards Adam than he had been since the

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young man from Wheatley entered the store. This kept up, and along in the afternoon, when the dull time came and Mr. Salt was out talking with his neighbors, C. Coleman said :

"You look to me as if you were fond of hunting and all good sport."

"Yes," replied Adam, "I am."

"I was thinking whether you would like to go with me some time to hunt the night-owls. There is a very interesting lot of them about two miles from town, and if we could capture some of them we might sell them for a good price. You can climb, can't you?"

"Oh, yes."

"We might go after the store closes, you know—that is, if you would like to."

"I should be very glad to go—that is, of course, if Mr. Salt would not mind me getting in too late. I suppose we'd be home by midnight."

"Yes," said C. Coleman, almost with a grimace, "you may be back sooner than that."

Adam mentioned the matter to Mr. Salt, and Mr. Salt's eyes fairly danced. He was on the point of saying something, but he held his peace—for once.

"Of course, it's all right. Of course you may go, and good luck to you."

As the two young men proceeded on their way,

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C. Coleman began to enlarge upon the dangers of their mission. The night-owls were great fighters, and incidentally the tree towards which they were going was on the premises of a bad man who was free with the use of his gun. But so long as C. Coleman showed no fear Adam made no objections. As they neared the tree Adam observed several things, with the keenness of the boy who had lived the open life.

The tree had long limbs hanging comparatively low. From the centre extended a stout upper shoot. The foliage was thick. He heard peculiar noises as they crept towards it. C. Coleman said it was the birds. Adam assented.

"The owls are on that middle stem," said C. Coleman, "and all you have to do is to climb it and then catch the young birds and toss them down to me. I'll wait right under the tree."

Having gone this far, Adam had no idea of backing out. It seemed strange and useless business, but he proceeded just the same. It was easy to mount to the first branch and then to step upward to the place where the main climb began.

But just then a pistol was fired from one of the branches; then another, and another until a fusilade was going on all around him.

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He jumped first in astonishment, but quickly a second thought told him that it was all a trick. He had read of things similar to that before, but had fallen into the trap of C. Coleman unsuspectingly. So he stood in silence while the shooting went on.

Presently one by one the "night-owls" dropped from the branches.

Still he did not move.

Then they began to whisper to one another. There had been a case years before in which the victim of this same sort of horse-play had been scared to death. Perhaps the young man from Wheatley had died from shock.

Their voices grew louder, and they began to call him, and as each shout went up Adam stepped down the branches as noiselessly as he could, and then when they called again he saw his opportunity and dropped suddenly among them, frightening them beyond all powers of movement and speech.

But he was not through. He came after night-owls and he would take some night-owls home. The fat fellow who began to run he tripped. Two others he tumbled into the ditch which was near, and C. Coleman and a slim young man named Burler he dashed after and caught. They pleaded, but he would not let them go. When they refused he

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dragged them towards the town. In vain they begged him to be merciful. "The whole town will laugh at us," said C. Coleman.

"And you wanted to make the whole town believe me a coward," replied Adam. "Well, you shan't. I don't want to hurt either of you, but you've got to come with me."

When they reached the long business street Adam noticed that there were lights in some of the places—something quite unusual for that hour. Jones and Burler saw too, and begged and kicked all the harder, but Adam was now angry all the way through. He stood them together on the road.

"Now," he said, "I've been gentle with you both, but if either of you gives me any more trouble I won't be responsible for the consequences."

They meekly submitted, for they were cowed; they had never before met such strength in any man, young or old.

Adam this time put them on his shoulders and marched boldly up the street. The waiting crowd had congregated around the barber shop. Even Mr. Salt was there. As Adam hove in sight a silence fell upon all. Perhaps some of the jokers had been killed. But the suspense was over in a minute.

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Adam placed the young men on the big box in front of the store and the light fell upon their flushed faces and disturbed looks.

"Here are two of the night-owls," said Adam with something of a boast in his voice.

"What did you do to the others?" was quickly asked.

"Oh, they have gone to find dry feathers," he replied, and then he made his way quickly to the gate that led to Samuel Salt's house, and Samuel Salt was close on his heels.

"They thought you were a nice little Sunday-school boy from the country," laughed Mr. Salt, shaking with joy and merriment. "I thought you'd do something of the kind, but you've simply eclipsed the record, my boy. You've beat 'em all."

It was an old practical joke, but one that existed in Chester and towns of its kind for many years, a species of play which was to communities what hazing was to colleges; but Adam went into it innocently, and he was surprised that Mr. Salt did not warn him.

"Of course I couldn't say anything," explained Mr. Salt. "That would have been against the custom of the town, and if you go against the custom the customers will go against you. But you needn't

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have any regrets, my boy. You'll get along in Chester after this all right."

But Adam was still perverse. When he found that the trick was planned against him because he went to Sunday-school, he was determined to show his grit to the end. The next Sunday he was again in the class of Miss Constance Crawford.

XIII

THE BRADSONS MOVE TO CHESTER

ONE of the finest houses in Chester was on the corner opposite to that occupied by the Crawford residence. It had been unoccupied for a number of years, but several weeks after Adam reached town it was opened and refurnished. In a few days the Bradsons moved in. They brought all their horses, and soon Paul was riding Tennie by Salt's store. Then Adam fully realized the distance between his own poverty and the wealth of the Bradsons. To them Chester bowed down with prompt and general deference. Even Mr. Salt's salutation seemed to say, "I should like to have your trade."

Adam and Paul spoke as they passed, but they never stopped to talk. Adam saw the increasing popularity of the Bradsons, and this made him more lonesome. He heard that Mr. Bradson had engaged Newill to take Paul in hand and to make a lawyer out of him. This seemed the worst of all, for it happened at a time when Adam was coming to a realization of his own dislike of merchandizing.

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Barter and sale did not appeal to him. He tried to understand his feelings, but they seemed to be far beyond him. Incomprehensible ambitions, thoughts, emotions, and speculations ran through his mind. A belligerent spirit, like some untamed animal, romped within him. He sighed for the hills; some days he felt as though he could rush out of the door and run all the way to Wheatley. He wanted something different, something higher. He had a good place; a raise in salary was already in sight, and no one could be kinder than Mr. Salt, but with it all the perturbations tugged at his very soul. He was an eagle in a chicken-coop. That Tuesday afternoon it seemed that he could not remain within doors.

"Adam," called Mr. Salt, "how would you like to take a walk into the country? It's not very far, and I promised to send this bundle of goods by four o'clock, and there's nobody to carry it."

Adam jumped at the chance and was off almost before Mr. Salt could add another word.

"That is what I call the right spirit," said Mr. Salt, when Adam had gone. "Always willing, always eager." But sometimes Mr. Salt could not see through things.

It was less than a mile and a half in the country, and Adam's soul rejoiced when he got beyond the

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town limits. He ran a little, swung his arms, and threw back his head to catch the full sunshine. His impulses, that had been cooped up in Salt's store, made him do all his boyish tricks. He threw stones at the birds, stopped at the roadside spring, and on his knees drank from its welcome water. He felt differently, he was getting out the blue devils that had been chasing one another through his system, and the old enthusiasm was upon him. When he delivered his bundle he was disappointed that the house was no farther away, and he halted awhile to talk with the men at work, and on a banter he ploughed a furrow in the field, and then, in a spirit of fun, jumped upon the back of one of the horses, "just to feel what it is like," he said.

Then he took the longest way home, and it brought him into the road from Wheatley, with its fine old trees and its wild flowers. A few minutes later he heard the clatter of horse's hoofs, and he could have sworn that they were those of Tennie. So sure was he that he would not turn around to look, and he was not greatly surprised to hear Paul Bradson call:

"Morning, Adam. Taking a walk?"

"Good-morning, Paul," he replied, quietly. "Do I look as though I were riding?"

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Paul laughed and noticed that Adam was not looking at the horse.

"Like your place?" he asked.

"Why, of course I do. I've one of the best positions in town."

"Say, Adam, how would you like to take a little run on Tennie? I'll wait for you. I haven't a thing to do."

"No, thank you."

Paul dismounted and stood near him. "Oh, come now. By-gones are by-gones, you know, and——"

Just then Tennie would no longer endure neglect. She shoved her pretty nose right into the face of Adam, and if ever horse tried to smile and say a pleasant greeting, she did then. It was too much even for Adam's stoicism. He raised his hand, ran it along her forehead, and then laid his head beside her own, still patting and petting the noble brute.

"See, she wants you to," declared Paul.

Before Adam could make up his wavering mind a double team rushed down the road. A glance showed him that the occupants were the clergyman and Miss Constance Crawford in the front seat, and Mr. Crawford in the rear seat. The horses had run away.

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They would soon be in town, and then collision and disaster.

Adam grabbed Paul and shouted, "Jump on and stop the horses." But Paul seemed paralyzed.

"Get on, you fool," shouted Adam. But the nerveless young man was rooted to the earth.

With a wave of his arm Adam swept him aside, bounded into the saddle, and shouted, "Now, Tennie, your best—your best, old girl."

It all happened so much more quickly than it takes to tell it that even Adam scarcely knew that his hat had fallen and that he was flying like the wind, calling at the top of his voice, "Don't jump! Don't jump! I'll stop them; I'll stop them!"

Again, as they turned into the town street and women screamed and ran and rushed from houses, Adam kept on shouting with a voice that went far ahead of the rush, "Don't jump! Keep your seats!"

The two horses were running splendidly, but there was a faster one behind them.

"Your double best, Tennie," Adam said, slapping her on the flank. "One more and we'll win."

He had caught up with the carriage, and his face was in a line with that of Constance Crawford.

"Hold tight!" he cried. "Don't jump!"

A few seconds more and he was within reach of

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the leader's bridle. He reached forth and held it. Leaving Tennie to do the sensible thing, he used both hands, and thus secured control of both runaways, and a minute later he had steered them safely through the street and had brought them to a stop.

Then when Mr. and Mrs. Crawford and the minister dismounted, and while others who had rushed forward were holding the Crawfords' horses, he got out of the crowd and galloped away before any one could say a word about what he had done.

He found Paul trudging towards the town and carrying his hat. "Thank you," he said, as he got off the horse and went his way.

Mr. Crawford stopped at the store the next day to ask Adam if he would favor him and his daughter by taking tea with them Sunday evening. It was a new experience, and frankly he did not want to go, but before he could frame a declination he had accepted. He explained his perturbations to Mr. Salt.

"Of course, you'll go," said Mr. Salt. "You needn't be afraid of anything. You're as good as the best of 'em. Now, if it was me, I might make fifty breaks and not know it. But you—well, Adam, you're not that kind. You've got the gentleman born in you. But look out for the tongs."

"The tongs?" asked Adam.

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"Yes, the tongs. Thought I'd told you that story. A young fellow who was not used to much silver went out to dinner. 'Will you pass me the tongs please?' asked the fair young lady. The tongs? he thought. What in the world did people do with tongs on the table; and he was about to look around to the fireplace, when somebody picked up the little thing that you handle lump sugar with. You'll be all right, even if Miss Constance asks for tongs."

Mr. Salt was right. Adam never received a better welcome, and he felt that it was sincere. Mr. Weir was there. Constance looked particularly charming in a gray dress. Mr. Crawford, as usual, was delightful and full of humor.

"Of course, you like Mr. Salt," said Mr. Crawford. "We all do. He has done much to add to the innocent gayety of Chester. When he first came here the young men tried to play the same trick they attempted upon you."

Adam did not enjoy this personal reference, and Mr. Crawford noticed it.

"Oh, we were even worse in those days than they are now. Perhaps I was one of the crowd who had intentions upon the new-comer. At any rate, when we thought we had gained Salt's confidence sufficiently he was asked if he would not like to go

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hunting for night-owls. He said he certainly would, that nothing would please him better, that he was just crazy to go, but most unfortunately for him it was impossible. 'It's this way,' he explained. 'At night I can't see, and the owls can. Now, if you will only go in the daytime, I'll have a chance of getting something, for then the owls can't see and I can.' We always believed Salt in some way got a hint of the game; at any rate, he was not caught.

"In fact," continued Mr. Crawford, "we never knew him to be worsted but once. That was also in his early days in the town when he was going around to all the churches, extending his acquaintance and gathering popularity. At one of them he attended a prayer-meeting, and among those who gave in their experiences was a new convert who owed a bill much over-due at Salt's store. This convert began to tell of his deep contrition, and then went on, 'Brothers and sisters, I'm a poor, struggling mortal loaded down with debt,' and from Mr. Salt's corner came a deep 'Amen.' The convert paused, but gathered strength and continued: 'Debts which ought to be paid,' and from Mr. Salt's corner came another, a more fervent 'Amen.' But the convert was not to be dismayed. 'I sometimes feel that I'm the worst sinner in all the world.' And

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then several others joined Mr. Salt, and there were 'Amens' from different parts of the room. 'The worst sinner in the world,' he repeated, in louder tones, 'except them hypocrites that's a-shoutin' "Amens" at me in this here very room, especially that sepulchre in the corner.' Well, Mr. Salt never went back to that church; and perhaps that's why you now have him in your flock, Mr. Weir."

"I'm glad to have him," said Mr. Weir. "He is a very useful man. I once went to him for some practical advice. I had outlined a series of sermons on Biblical history and the Higher Criticism, and I talked over the whole list of themes, crowding in my theological knowledge as fast as I could, and finally asking him what he thought of the idea. He paused a minute and then said, 'Well, Weir, if you've got big enough wings to take you that high, there's nothing to prevent your flying, but as for the rest of us, I don't believe there's a balloon or a telescope in town.'"

Very much to Adam's comfort, the stock of stories about Mr. Salt was large enough to extend over the tea, and he was surprised at the flight of time when Mr. Weir said he must be going for the evening service. Of course, Miss Crawford had to be in the choir. She turned to Adam and asked him if he would go with them.

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"I wished to have Mr. Rush for the evening," said Mr. Crawford. But Adam had already accepted the invitation, and Mr. Crawford went also.

Mr. Crawford and the minister led the way and Adam found himself walking beside Miss Crawford, a little embarrassed by the novelty of it, but reassured by the success of the supper. They talked on general topics, and when they reached the church she went in the choir, while he sat with Mr. Crawford, in the second pew from the front, where he had an excellent view of her all through the services.

He tried to listen to the discourse, but he found himself thinking of Miss Crawford. She was a little too stiff, he thought; she held her back rigid almost to primness, and he smiled within as he compared her with Hona riding a horse like the wind and with her hair streaming back in waves of gold. But Miss Crawford had a fine face; it was so fine—fine rather than strong—that he confessed himself a bit afraid of it. When she sang a radiance came that took away the look that he misinterpreted, and he was clearly nonplussed by the clashing of his impressions. Perhaps his features grew solemn and intent in his thoughtful moods, and suddenly he felt that she was gazing at him. He wondered why.

After the benediction Mr. Crawford went out with

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a friend and left Adam to wait for Miss Crawford. She came smilingly towards him, and his swift intuitions made him feel a bit ashamed that he had thought her cold.

"You sang beautifully to-night," he said, after they had reached the street and she had taken his arm; "almost as beautifully as the first time I heard you."

"When was that?" she asked.

The picture of his sleep in the church gallery stood before him, but, thankful that she could not see it, he readily replied, "When I first came to Chester. I was just from home, and your song was about being far from home and weary often while. You don't know how deeply that song sank into my mind that night."

"But it was at the morning service I sang it."

"Oh, yes—yes, so it was," said Adam, quickly.

"I'm afraid that you are inclined to be too complimentary."

"No, really, I meant every word I said."

"Except the time of day."

"Yes, with that exception."

"Do you like Chester?" she asked.

"Yes; but of course it's different. I miss the country and the riding and the quiet."

"Why, we all call Chester poky, but," and she laughed merrily, "I forgot you were with Mr. Salt."

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They walked on a moment in silence, and then she gave Adam a genuine shock. "Why did you deny you stopped the runaway?" she asked.

"What runaway?"

"You were riding the horse."

"What horse?"

"Won't you please, just for me, shout, 'Don't jump.'"

"It would not be proper on Sunday," he replied, with a laugh.

"I know I am right," she declared; "but why did you let the credit go to another?"

"Really, Miss Crawford, I live such a modest life I do not know much about others in Chester. Do you refer to Mr. Salt?"

"Mr. Salt on a horse?" and she was laughing when Mr. Crawford joined them at the gate, and all entered together.

"Father," she declared, "it was Mr. Rush who stopped the runaway."

"Of course," he replied, calmly, "I knew that."

"But Mr. Bradson?"

"I investigated that, too. He never claimed the credit. Some persons thought it was he because of the horse. They were all so excited that Mr. Rush got away without being noticed."

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"Oh," she said, in the manner of a woman who did not know exactly what to say under the circumstances, but she was thinking that if she had known it Paul Bradson would also have been invited to tea.

Mr. Crawford led Adam through the hall and the dining-room to a building connected with the house, a long office, with broad windows, with a table heaped with papers, and with old chairs full of soft comfort and familiar wear.

"I knew your family years ago," said the lawyer, "especially your mother's relatives. Your mother Mr. Rush, in her youth was one of the sweetest and loveliest women I ever saw."

"She is now," said Adam, promptly.

"I do not doubt it. I do not doubt it," replied the lawyer.

After a little pause he went on. "Your mother's father had a brother, but the two brothers had different inclinations. Your grandfather preferred his farm down in Wheatley, and lived the retired life. Your grand-uncle became the leader of the bar in this county, and afterwards judge of the Circuit Court. But these things you know. What I wanted to say particularly was that it was in his office that I studied law. He was a severe man, but he knew how to be kind—he knew how to help a young man.

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Now, probably, I cannot do much, but I would like to make you feel that you may come to me and find a friend. I wish especially to give you the advantage of anything in my library. The reading facilities of the town are limited, and perhaps you will get the most of them in this room. I do not mean that I want to wean you away from your present employment, for I find that Salt has been uncommonly civil to you, nor do I say anything against trade, for it is teaching lessons to the professions, and its state shows the moral as well as the financial condition of the times. But it takes an intense liking for the work and a person of Salt's keenness. If you have the bargaining quality in you, by all means develop it and take your place among the men of money, but I should not like to see a man of your antecedents and evident abilities standing behind a counter all his life."

Very adroitly Mr. Crawford turned the talk into other directions, but he had touched the deep spot in Adam's ambitions, and the young man gladly accepted when, on leaving, Mr. Crawford said, "Here are two books which are worth reading, and you can come and get the others at any time you want them. And, by the way, if you can spare the time, it might be worth your while to be in court next Wednesday

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and Thursday, when we are to have a trial that may interest you."

When Adam reached the house, Mr. Salt had retired. "It certainly was a lonesome evening for your uncle Samuel," he called to Adam. "Have a good time?"

"It was very pleasant," replied Adam.

After Adam lighted his lamp he picked up one of his books and began to read. Before he was aware of the flight of time the clock struck twelve, but he was in the midst of the story of a real life, of the biography of a lawyer who told of famous contentions and filled his pages with epigram and anecdote, and he felt annoyed when the clock told him that one o'clock had come. He still read on, but presently he resisted temptation to spend the whole night on the volume, and went to bed from a sense of duty alone, but with a new feeling within him, as though he had breathed another atmosphere and had caught a higher hope in life; and, thinking of Constance Crawford and of what Mr. Crawford had said, he finally fell into dreams, and Mr. Salt, for the first time, had to knock loudly on the door the next morning to wake him up.

XIV

THE UNLUCKY CHAPTER

“WELL, my boy,” called Mr. Salt from the desk, as he finished opening the morning mail on Friday, “here are ten letters, ten postal-cards, ten circulars, and three ten-dollar checks, and as I looked at my watch I noticed that it was ten minutes and ten seconds after ten. That does not look much like this being Friday, the thirteenth day of the month, does it?”

“The day isn’t over yet,” said Adam.

“That’s so, and while I am in a good humor, and as there is nothing going on, I believe I’ll take a little walk for my health. Won’t be gone long.”

Next to Salt’s store was Mrs. Patty Pringle’s millinery shop. It was the centre of all feminine gossip, and served a similar purpose in that respect that the sycamore-tree at the hotel corner did for the men. Patty Pringle was small in size and insectivorous in action. She had a tongue as sharp as a razor’s edge, and much more effective, because its cutting qualities improved with use and with age. She could rip a

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character while sewing on a feather ; she could blast a reputation while measuring a yard of ribbon. Her speech was swift, merciless, and incessant, and nobody was surprised at the melancholy appearance of her husband, for there was a Jeremiah Pringle, who helped Samuel Salt take up the collection on Sunday, and who rested from his labors all the other six days of the week ; a man of blameless habits, who neither drank, smoked, nor swore—nor worked. Mr. Pringle did not fully fill the demands of Patty's energies ; so she devoted her odd moments to the training and petting of a dog that could really do something, such as picking up things that were dropped, or running after sticks and balls. Some little time before Samuel Salt had started forth Patty Pringle had taken her dog Don out for an airing, and the very minute Mr. Salt was descending the hill to cross the bridge Mrs. Pringle was throwing sticks in the creek for Don to swim after, and was deep in her play when Mr. Salt called a cheery good-morning from the bridge. She replied in the same spirit, and stood on the bridge with the merchant, rattling off the talk of the day and giving Mr. Salt few opportunities to get a word in edgeways. He did not object to this, for he had—without understanding that he really did have it—a fine appreciation of the

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little woman who was able to take care of herself and at the same time bear the burden of an idle husband. As the conversation went on the dog quit the water and sat quietly between the two, looking up as though he would like to know what was being said.

"Oh, Mr. Salt," she giggled, "that new clerk of yours has done a lot of funny things that you've never heard about. He's so nice-looking that nobody wants to tell on him, and it wouldn't do any good to bother you, anyhow, and he really seems to be such a fine gentleman; but, oh, the snuff, the snuff." And her laughter rang above the ripples of the stream. "Now, don't ask me to tell you. It wouldn't be fair; indeed, it wouldn't; for Aunt Sallie Pringle don't want anybody to know that she ever takes snuff. Now, you mustn't breathe that to a soul, but, oh, it was the funniest thing." And she broke forth again, making Mr. Salt laugh in spite of his ignorance of the details.

"She almost sneezed herself to death. Really we thought of sending for the doctor. She sneezed and she sneezed and she sneezed, and the stuff got spilt, and we all got to sneezing, and it was the sneezingest time you ever did hear of—oh, but it was so funny. I laugh yet until I get weak all over——"

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"What——" Mr. Salt tried to interrupt.

"It wasn't snuff at all he sent her. It was about the same color, but it wasn't snuff." And her cachinnations increased.

"What——" Mr. Salt began again.

"Cayenne pepper," she screamed.

"Cayenne pepper," repeated Mr. Salt, opening his mouth to its full width; "cayenne——" And then from the depths came an ebullient and overwhelming guffaw, and——

Tragedy treads upon the heels of comedy; sorrow clings to the skirts of mirth. That explosion of jollity was too much for the fastenings of Samuel Salt's false teeth, which fell to the floor of the bridge with a crash and a bound, and before a word could be spoken the dog had grabbed them and was running away as though it were a part of the play.

For a moment Mrs. Pringle and Mr. Salt were too dumfounded to speak a word, but both started after the little beast at the same time, and the faster they ran the more speed the dog put on.

Mrs. Pringle began to call, "Don, drop Mr. Salt's teeth this instant!" and then, "Don, if you don't drop Mr. Salt's teeth, I'll whip you!" and so on until Mr. Salt's infuriation knew no bounds.

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"Stop!" he cried to the dog. "Drop it, I say!" and many other demands and imprecations which filled the tragical moments.

The race was too much for Patty Pringle. She stopped and gasped, but Samuel Salt kept bravely on until finally he overtook the dog, made him give up the property, and then in his blind anger kicked at him savagely.

Patty Pringle saw the kick and screamed. If it had been her husband, she might have cried; but to kick her beloved Don—it was monstrous; it was brutal.

Samuel Salt did not care. He had enough of Patty Pringle and her dog, and he kept on in the direction he had run and left the situation to take care of itself. The words that were trembling upon his lips were not fit for a member of church or for a lady for whom he had hitherto cherished a silent esteem. It did not occur to him to blame it all on the dog, and so he went his way.

When Patty Pringle found that the kick had not reached, and that Don was uninjured, she became more calm, and before she reached the top of the hill she was smiling, and by the time she entered her store she was so full of talk that she had to bite her lips to keep the words from falling out.

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And when she did get into the store and found a choice circle of gossips who had gathered for their daily rations she went into a fit of laughter that bordered on hysteria.

"What do you think?" she whooped. "What do you think? Oh, it is so funny—I really believe I'll die of heart disease a-laughing. The bow legs were bad enough, but who would ever have thought that Samuel Salt wears false teeth?" And then she told the whole story with merry exaggerations, and within an hour the choice circle had spread the fateful news around the town.

Mr. Salt prolonged his walk, and unfortunately returned at the wrong time, for all the business interests along Main Street were enjoying the story. Some of them did not hesitate to ask him questions, and then he realized the full damage that had been done. He was more aroused than ever, and he began to say things, all of which intimated that Patty Pringle was a town nuisance, with more tongue than sense, and without a due appreciation of the truth. He went so far as to declare that if she wanted to sharpen her needles all she needed to do was to apply them to her tongue. And these acrimonious statements reached Patty Pringle in the course of the day.

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Adam noticed the saddened and dejected air of Mr. Salt when he entered the store—noticed the alarming difference between the buoyant man who had gone for a walk and the miserable creature who returned. Mr. Salt did not say anything about what had happened. He was too cast down; never in his life had he felt so forlorn and so mortified.

In the midst of this wretchedness who should come in but Bill Story, the irreverent bully of the town, who had long had a grudge against Mr. Salt.

“I would like to look at some new teeth,” he said.

Mr. Salt did not reply.

“I want a new set of false teeth,” he repeated.

“Heard you’re dealing in them now.”

“Get out of here,” exclaimed Mr. Salt, as ferociously as he could.

“Who are you orderin’?” demanded the man.

“You! Get out of here, and don’t come back until you go to work and support your family.”

Bill’s face flushed, and with an oath he reached for the merchant, but Mr. Salt was too agile for him. The ruffian poured out his epithets, and suddenly started for the opening which divided the two counters.

There he faced Adam, who said quietly, “You heard your orders. Now, get out!”

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Bill laughed and swore at the young man. Then he turned to keep up his volleys at Mr. Salt, and held his fists on his hips as he poured out his sacrilegious words.

This was Adam's opportunity. Quickly placing his hands inside of Bill's elbows he bent his arms around and held him with a grip of iron.

"Will you go, or must I throw you out?" asked Adam, sharply.

The braggart began some more of his language, but he had not completed a sentence before Adam had given a shove and a kick and had started him on a run to the door. He did not stop there, but kept him going until he reached the road, where he threw him, full face, into the dust.

Adam stood over him. "Now," he said, "you may get up and show whether or not you are the low-down coward I take you to be."

Bill began to rise, but he moved slowly and away from the young man. Adam advanced, and by this time a crowd was gathering. In a few minutes Bill was on his feet, backing a little as he moved, Adam stepping closer each time. "Get away from the front of this store or fight—take your choice."

Bill mumbled something about settling it another time, and turning on his heel slunk down the street.

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There was general joy over this episode, for Bill Story's big bluffs had never before been called.

Adam smiled grimly when he re-entered the store. "Mr. Salt," he asked, in pure mischief, "how do you like Friday, the thirteenth?"

"And it isn't over yet," said Mr. Salt, almost in a groan.

"No, it isn't over yet," repeated Adam.

Many came in to ask questions, but both Mr. Salt and Adam declined to discuss either false teeth, dogs, or fights. And after awhile the day drifted into the afternoon calm.

"Mr. Salt," said Adam, "there's nothing to do up here, and I think I'll go down in the cellar and take that inventory we were talking about last week."

"All right, Adam."

Adam went into the back room, opened the cellar door, which was part of the floor, descended, and pulled the doors down. He did his work slowly, as there was no need for haste, and sat by the window at intervals to re-read his letters from Wheatley.

Mr. Salt, tired out by the day's wear upon his nervous system, was almost asleep when Jeremiah Pringle appeared before him.

"Mr. Salt," he said, "I wish to speak with you, sir—to speak with you in private."

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"All right, Jeremiah," replied Mr. Salt, waking up, "what's the matter now?"

"I think we'd better withdraw into the other room."

"All right." And they stood facing each other in the little aisle between the half-barrels of salt mackerel.

"Mr. Salt, I come to you, sir, to demand an explanation of the words which you spoke about my wife."

"What words, Jeremiah?" asked Mr. Salt, sleepily

"The words used on sundry and divers occasions since this morning, sir. When you said, sir, that a buzz-saw was a spinning-wheel compared with Mrs. Pringle's tongue; when you said, sir, that she sharpened her needles on it; when you said, sir, that it ran faster than a sewing-machine, and only stopped when it tried to tell the truth."

"Now, look here, Jeremiah," put in Mr. Salt, "I've had enough fuss this day, but you go tell your wife that when she quits a-talking about me I'll quit talking about her; but as long as she says I ought to wear skirts to keep the public from seeing my bow legs, and sends around stories that I wear false teeth, and perhaps a lot of other things that ain't what they

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seem, I've got a right to express my feelings. I wouldn't be human if I didn't."

"That is no explanation, sir."

"What do you want, a fight?"

"I want satisfaction, sir," he said, as boldly as he could.

"I guess you do," exclaimed Mr. Salt, breaking into a laugh. "And if you get it, it'll be the first time since you were married, eh?"

"I am in earnest," protested Mr. Pringle.

"Oh, you are, are you? You are, are you?" said Mr. Salt, doubling up his fists and gritting his teeth, for the pugilistic spirit displayed by Adam had somewhat aroused his courage.

"Yes, I am."

"And you want to fight, do you?"

The two men stood and glared at each other with doubts surging through them, with words hanging upon their lips, but without the spirit to strike a blow.

At that moment Adam was coming up from the cellar, and when the doors seemed heavier than usual he gave a sudden and vigorous push that had melancholy consequences, for it upset Mr. Pringle into a half-barrel of salt mackerel and landed Mr. Salt on the opposite side of the aisle in a position that was awkward but dry.

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Adam was so astonished that he stood with his head popped up, alternately gazing at the two men, who had no speech to express their discomfiture. But it was so ridiculous that he was roaring with laughter as he completed his ascent and let down the doors on which Mr. Salt and Mr. Pringle had been standing.

In another minute Mr. Salt caught his breath enough for speech.

"Get out of my fish," he shouted to Mr. Pringle.

"Darn your fish," shouted Mr. Pringle. "I'll sue you for this." And then to Adam, "I'm so tight in I can't get out."

"Pull him out," commanded Mr. Salt.

Adam did so, but not without damage to Mr. Pringle's wardrobe. Then he helped Mr. Salt from the medley of boxes and barrels into which he had fallen.

Adam's presence helped Mr. Salt's courage. "Now," he shouted in his thin voice, "if you want to fight, I'll fight you."

Mr. Pringle's salt bath had intensified his temper and aroused all the latent force within him. He was as mad as a wet rooster on a cold morning. It seemed so farcical that Adam could not believe it at first; but when he realized that they were in earnest, he took Mr. Salt by the shoulder and shoved him to

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the front part of the store, and then closed the door, and locked it.

He looked Mr. Pringle over, and said, "Mr. Pringle, I think you'd better go out by the rear way, climb the fence, and slip up-stairs through the kitchen."

Adam waited a good half-hour before he unlocked the door and went in the front room of the store. He saw Mr. Salt busily at work and did not interrupt him. Another half-hour sped away, and then Mr. Salt called him.

"Business, my boy, always think of business. Here it is—three rows, ten letters in each row." And Adam read this announcement, which was soon placed upon the bulletin-board of Salt's store:

BIG BARGAIN
A1 MACKEREL
LITTLE HURT
JUST AS GOOD
AS VERY BEST
BUT CRUSHED
WE NOW OFFER
SPECIAL LOT
BUY QUICKLY

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There was a long silence at the supper-table that night, but Mr. Salt finally remarked :

“This has been a day.”

“Yes,” said Adam, “it has been a day.”

XV

MISS HONA COMES TO TOWN

COMPARISONS need not be either invidious or odious, and those made by Adam Rush in his moments of calm reflection were as free from injury either in fact or intent as anything could be. But he saw certain things, and these things were in his thoughts constantly.

For instance, he felt himself to be a better man than Paul Bradson, but Paul Bradson as a law student stood higher in the community than Adam Rush as a clerk. Wealth did much, but it could not do all, and, making every possible allowance, the fact remained that the professional man, not to count wealth, had the better of it.

Of selling and buying, of the long hours and the scant interest, of being at the beck and call of everybody who had money to spend at the store, Adam was heartily weary. Even his liking for Mr. Salt could not conquer his aversion to the toil.

So he sought Mr. Crawford and placed the facts

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before him. It was in the days when lawyers were made in the offices, and before the law-schools had taken the young men away from their county towns and decorated them with diplomas.

"I will be very frank with you, sir," said the young man. "I cannot afford to give up my present place, for I must have something to live on, but I cannot continue in it for a career. I thought perhaps it might be arranged that I could keep up with my studies under you, and at the same time make my wages in the store. I would like to go even further than that. I would like you to count my studies from the time I began reading the books you gave me. The reason I ask this is that I want to enter at the same term of court as Paul Bradson."

Mr. Crawford smiled. "I think it can be arranged, and possibly we can do better than you think. I really need a clerk here, and while I cannot pay much, the sum will be sufficient to meet your demands. It would of course necessitate your living with us."

"I had not expected that," said Adam.

"Well, you would not object, would you?"

"You see, Mr. Salt has been extremely kind——"

"Well, we'll let that settle itself. I will record your beginning from the first books, and the rest will

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happen. I will give you your own time in leaving Mr. Salt."

A lump came into Adam's throat. He arose and, shaking Mr. Crawford's hand, said, "I thank you, sir; you don't know how much I thank you."

As he left the office he saw Paul Bradson helping Constance Crawford into his new wagon. They had been driving frequently of late, and he wondered how such a woman could like such a man. He bowed and passed on to the store—the same old store, where the afternoons seemed never to end.

But now he had a new hope in life. He had read enough, he had seen enough in the courts, to give him a taste of the life to which he aspired. Still the eager impulses within fumed and fretted, and to-morrow seemed a long way off. If a war should break out, he would rush to the front. If a riot came, he would be in the thick of the fight. But as it was, he sat at the long end of the counter, out of sight of Samuel Salt, and read and read, forgetful of everything—even of a letter from Honora that lay beside him.

Then men came in to pass the time and talk. From the general gossip he heard something of interest. Mr. Bradson was taking a deep interest in politics, and was putting up the money for the party that

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had long been in the minority for lack of spirit and funds. Potter Weatherby—Pot Weatherby they called him—was travelling around looking into things. It probably had something to do with the railroad from Chester through the Wheatley Valley, and many thought it would be a good thing, for it would bring money to the county and give Chester the trade that went to the new town on the other side of Wheatley. Pot Weatherby was developing into a smooth politician. He had already converted the back districts, and he was sweeping things with his zeal and discretion. With money and the new railroad behind them, the candidates on the minority ticket stood a show. Really, politics promised to be lively. Anyhow, it might be a good thing if the minority party did win, for this party, although regularly defeated in Washington County, controlled the State, with the result that Washington County seldom got what it wanted from the Legislature. So the talk ran. So many of the people believed.

Suddenly he remembered the letter and hastened to find it. He read :

“DEAR ADAM : I received your letter and I was very glad to get it, although it seemed very short. But I suppose you do not have much time to write, working all day and spending the evenings with others. I laughed and laughed about Mr.

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Salt and the millinery woman. There seems to be something going on around here, but I can't exactly make out what it is. Mr. Bradson and papa are getting very thick, and we have more money than we used to have, so that there is no fussing when I want things, which makes it much pleasanter. To-day I saw your father and papa have a serious talk, and papa was solemn after it was over, but I don't know what it was about. I tell you all I see and hear, but you don't tell me half. You didn't tell me about going to church with Miss Constance Crawford, but I heard about it. Did you like her much? I mean as much as—no, I really mean, did you really like her? Is she large or small? What is the color of her hair? Are her eyes blue or brown? Do you think you will call to see her again? I ask these questions because it's so stupid down here, you know, and we get interested in *anything*. Also tell me about the other girls you have met, but I guess there are so many that you would have nothing else to do but write. I hope you are well. We are all quite well, and so is Psyche.

“Your friend,

“HONA.”

“P.S.—I believe Psyche is getting to like me more and more every day. Sometimes dogs are kinder than people.

“P.S.—If you have any new pictures taken, you might send me one. I want to see if Psyche would recognize it.

“Last P.S.—Papa tells me that I may go to Chester with him some day soon. Will you be glad to see me?”

The conversation which Colonel Rush had with Potter Weatherby led up to Weatherby's confession

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that he had entered into the employment of Bradson, and it ended with Colonel Rush saying, "Pot, you may do all you say is on the programme, and it is for you to judge how and why you should do it, but there will come a certain time when you must look out. Traps will be set and lines will be drawn, and when the fatal moment arrives Bradson will be away and all the rest of you will be caught. Now, keep your eyes open, and never get into anything without leaving a wide way out. He is going to spend a lot of money. Let him spend it; don't you handle a penny of it, except that which comes to you direct, and don't let that get tangled up in notes or receipts. In other words, have yourself ready at any minute to wash your hands of Bradson as quickly as he can dispense with you. I know Bradson only too well. He is plausible and unscrupulous, and he thinks he can use you for a sacrifice if his plans should get into trouble."

This advice Mr. Potter Weatherby thankfully accepted.

Hona was growing lovelier as she approached womanhood. Her face was as flawless as the leaf of a pink rose, and its color was a little deeper. Her form was grace itself. She was not large, and yet she was full-bodied, with good warm flesh, and with

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the life that goes with undiminished health. She had lived most of the days in the air ; she had slept her full eight hours, and she could ride and walk and throw and dig with the tirelessness of a young Minerva. Now the forces that were bound up in her and which she did not understand began to fret and jump. Sometimes she would get on her horse and run him at full speed for the excitement that it gave to her. Sometimes she would walk to tire out the nerves that tugged at her soul. Then she would read, and Psyche would come and lie at her side, while dream-pictures filled the printed pages, and when she sighed the dog would look into her face as though seeking for her thoughts. In the midst of one of her spells of doubt, speculation, and introspection, her father came in and told her that they would all go to town on the morrow to remain over until the following Wednesday.

It was the Saturday preceding the convention, and Chester was unusually crowded. Salt's store was full of people most of the day. Adam dined on a few crackers, and Mr. Salt forgot his appetite in the rush of business. Both flitted from customer to customer, and sometimes tried to wait on two at once. In the midst of the afternoon rush Adam looked up and saw a smile that seemed to brighten

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the whole room. He made his way around to her as soon as he could and placed a chair in the corner right next to the counter.

"Now, sit right down," he said, "and I'll give you every minute I can snatch from the crowd. See how busy we are. It's been this way for hours. You needn't tell me you are well. You look fine.—Yes, ma'am, I'm coming." And he darted off to attend to the order of an old lady who thought she was being neglected. Adam manoeuvred so as to get close enough to Hona to say a word occasionally, but she could send him little in reply. Still she took it all in, and, frankly, she did not like it. She did not relish the idea of all these persons ordering Adam around, of making their complaints about prices, and this thing and that thing. She felt distinctly like telling them to get out of the place.

And it went on until a tall young woman stood by her and said, "Good-afternoon, Mr. Rush," and he responded, "Good-afternoon, Miss Crawford." It was then that Hona's eyes simply photographed the trim figure of Constance from tip to toe and took in her costume, especially the small, simple, shapely hat that sat so gracefully upon her brown hair, and which was in strong contrast with the flamboyant headgear of the others around, including that of Hona herself.

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It was not much Miss Crawford wanted, but in the few minutes Hona had received her impressions, and new intentions were jumping through her mind.

Adam got a minute and leaned over the counter. "Where are you stopping, and how long are you going to stay?"

"We are at the hotel, but it's so noisy around there that I slipped over here. Papa's busy, and I'm all alone."

"I'll fix that," declared Adam. "Mr. Salt's house is just back of the store. I'll take you in there, and you can make yourself at home, and I'll run in when I can."

He told Mr. Salt what he was going to do, and with a nod of approval from the merchant he quickly escorted the fair young woman through the fish department to the pretty yard and the cosey house beyond.

"Now, it is all yours," he said, as he showed her into the parlor. "My, but you are lovely. I've a great mind to kiss you."

Hona blushed as if to ask why he didn't, but the psychological instant passed, and she inquired where she might find the millinery shop. He told her.

"Now I must run back," he said, "but I'll be in to see you every time I can get away."

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He came within a half-hour, and found that she had gone out. At the end of another half-hour he found her surrounded by millinery. She was first to speak.

"I'll be as quick as I can," she said, as he gazed at the pile of hats and things on a chair in speechless amazement. "You sit over there by the window. Now watch me as I put them on. How do you like this?" He shook his head. "I thought you would't. How about this?"

"Better."

"Well, this one then? No, you don't like it. But this?" It was small, but it suited her admirably.

"But, Hona, where in heaven's name——"

"You may go back to your work. That's all I want with you now, but don't stay long if you can help it."

Then she kept on the one he liked, threw her old big hat upon the table, tumbled the others in the box, and hastened to the millinery shop and paid for her purchase. She lingered until she looked at the things in the place and bought what she wanted. Then when she returned to Mr. Salt's house she told the servant to show her to a room with a good mirror, and within an hour all her rural flamboyance

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had disappeared. There was a knock at the door['] with a summons from Adam.

Then she went into the parlor, looking lovelier than ever. Adam simply gasped.

"How do you like me now?" she demanded.

Adam held out his two arms, and before she knew it he was kissing her frantically. "That's how I like you," he said.

She pushed him away with fine scorn. "Oh, I see. It's just because I look more like her."

"Like whom?"

"*That* Miss Crawford. Oh, I saw her in the store, and I suppose she thought I was some country gawk sitting there waiting for my parcels."

Adam roared with laughter. She remained calm and thoughtful.

"Do you keep women's jackets in that old store of yours?"

"We have some, I believe," replied Adam between his outbreaks of merriment. "What size?"

"I don't know. Send them all in."

"Oh, I'll measure you for one, then." And he put his arm around her.

"Adam Rush," she exclaimed, angrily, "get away from here. No, come back. Where have you been practising all these things?"

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"Nowhere," he declared, solemnly.

"I don't believe it; but send in those jackets."

Salt's store boasted of everything that the human race needed for food or wear, but it did not always keep close to the fashion-plates. In spite of this, however, Adam managed to find several jackets which he thought might suit his new customer, and he sent them in. Soon all came back except one which she said she had retained, although she did not think much of it, and she also sent the money to pay for it.

There was a lull for supper-time, and Adam ran over to the hotel to find Mr. Weatherby and invite him to the meal, but as the new statesman from Wheatley was deeply immersed in politics he begged to be excused, and declared he was only too glad that Adam and Mr. Salt would take care of his daughter. It was fortunate, for Bradson money had already begun to circulate, and the crowds were becoming hilarious, so that it was not fit for a young woman to be at the hotel.

Mr. Salt welcomed Hona with effusive cordiality, and declared that she must take the guest-chamber and keep it as long as she stayed in Chester. He and Adam made her sit at the head of the table, and although they were obliged to gulp down their

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supper in order to return as quickly as possible to the store, they felt the gracious influence of a beautiful girl, and the food seemed to taste better than any they had ever eaten. But, then, it must be remembered, they were also hungry.

Hona had no compunctions about looking over the house. The conventions had never bothered her. She had no idea that she should sit meekly down and look at books until either Adam or Mr. Salt came in. She knew that they would be at their work most of the evening, and she did not intend to be idle herself. Mr. Salt's old cook was deeply shocked when the young woman went into the kitchen and began to talk about breakfast, but within a few minutes she had fallen under the influence of her beauty and vivacity, and had entered into her plans for a Sunday morning breakfast that would astonish the men of the household. Hona simply gave way to all her impulses. She rushed into the parlor, got her country hat, and presented it to the cook; she sent the colored woman for certain foods, and gave her the change; and then, having settled the morning meal, which she declared she would herself help to cook if help were needed—"for I can cook," she said—she finally settled down very properly by the parlor table, looking over one of Adam's books and waiting.

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Both Mr. Salt and Adam tried to rise to the occasion when they entered the house after eleven o'clock, but they were fatigued with the day's heavy work, and Hona had herself nodded three times over a single page in Adam's book.

"I am so sleepy in one eye that I can't keep the other one open," declared Mr. Salt, and he voiced their general condition.

On Sundays the two men indulged in a late breakfast, and did not bother about waking before eight o'clock ; but there were no exceptions in Hona's rule, she was awake at six every morning, and the quiet did not keep her from dressing and slipping downstairs to the kitchen, where she superintended the getting of breakfast, and then went into the garden and plucked a bouquet of flowers, which were placed upon the table. After this she wandered into the hall and heard the sound of knocking on her door, followed by a short inquiry :

"Hona, are you up?"

"No, down," she shouted with a vociferousness that made Adam jump, and caused Mr. Salt to make such hurry with his lingering toilet that both men were bowing to the young woman at the same instant. It would be a waste of effort to try to describe the breakfast, or to record the praises of Mr.

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Salt, who began to pour his adjectives upon the flowers and the better arrangement of the table, and who ended in a general bankruptcy of language before the meal was half over. It was Mr. Salt's habit to observe a proper solemnity on Sunday morning, but in this case his appreciations ran away with his theology.

Church-going was due soon after they arose from the table. Hona went to her room, and when she came down she called Adam into the parlor.

"Now look at me and see if I am all right."

"Perfect," he declared.

"You haven't half looked. Notice as I turn round. Does the skirt hang all right? Do I look all right in the back? Does the old jacket you sent in set well around the arms? How does the hat look from the back? Is the hair all right?" To each and all of these Adam replied affirmatively.

"Now button these gloves and get me a prayer-book, and we'll start."

Mr. Salt and Adam were more than satisfied with the country girl they were escorting; they were delighted with the impression her beauty created, and when they got back to dinner, and she asked Adam, "Did I do everything all right?" he replied, with a clear conscience, "Yes, everything, except that I

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don't believe you listened to the sermon, for you were looking at the choir most of the time."

"Well, what if I was? I don't think she's a bit pretty."

Mr. Weatherby came over to see Hona and to tell Mr. Salt that he feared she might be trespassing upon his hospitality, and that as the crowds had left town she might safely return to the hotel.

"Well, she's not going," declared Mr. Salt.

"Indeed, I'm not," said Hona. "The room over there is like a jail cell, and here I have the whole house."

"Including the occupants," added Mr. Salt.

So the three days slipped into one another like a charmed dream separated from the realities of life by golden barriers, and while politics were being played, while the Bradson money flowed, and while the Bradson influence worked out the Bradson ticket, three persons, who were not bothering with schemes and offices, were light-hearted and happy.

The last evening Hona and Adam took a long walk, and when they returned they had the parlor to themselves.

"Adam," said Hona, more seriously than was her wont, "in a way it seems very nice here, but something tells me you will not be working as you are

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now all your life. I hated to see you obeying and filling other people's orders, and all like that. You used to give orders and—well, I don't know what to say, but I don't like it."

"Hona, I'm telling you a secret, but I don't expect to be with Mr. Salt much longer."

"Where are you going?"

"I shall study law."

"Where?"

"With Mr. Crawford."

"But where will you live?"

"At Mr. Crawford's."

"You mean that you're going to live in the same house with *her*?"

"She has nothing to do with it," he replied. "I am to be Mr. Crawford's clerk, and at the same time I am to study. By this arrangement I shall get my board and at the same time make something. It's the only way I can become a lawyer, and Mr. Crawford is very kind to make the offer, and very generous to give me the opportunity."

"But you'll be in the house with her, will be at the same table, will——" but she suddenly checked herself.

"And I will always be thinking of you, Hona, always thinking of you. But you know, dear, that

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we are both quite young yet, and I have my mark to make. I don't know how I'll turn out, but I'm going to do my best."

"Oh," she almost cried, "I'm not afraid about your succeeding, but——"

"But I must first show if I can succeed. Well, I haven't done it in the store."

"You don't mean to say that Mr. Salt is not satisfied? Why, you're worth a million of him."

"Mr. Salt has never found any fault; he has been kindness itself, but I know very well that I am not progressing. My heart is not in it. I loathe the whole business."

They talked far towards the midnight hour. He could never forget her. She could think of no one but him.

The next morning Hona left. Mr. Salt and Adam had the house to themselves that evening. Both tried to read, and both were restless and quiet. They were not following the lines of their books. Each glanced at the other occasionally, as though suspicious of his sincerity. After awhile Mr. Salt slammed down his volume and declared he could not see any sense in what the man was trying to say.

"I didn't believe she could make such a difference in the house," he said. "And to think I stood it all

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here by myself for all these years before you came."

"It does seem lonelier," said Adam.

"I thought that you made more difference than anybody else could make," said Mr. Salt, solemnly. "You have been a great comfort and happiness to me, Adam."

"You have been very kind to me, Mr. Salt."

"It may have been selfishness."

"I deny that. It was the very essence of kindness, and I can never forget it."

"Not even if you leave me?"

"Never."

"Then you think of going," said the merchant, sadly.

Adam did not know what to say. He wanted to postpone the parting as long as possible.

"Don't be afraid of me, my boy," said Mr. Salt. "I've seen, even if I had not known. You have tried to tell me several times, but you couldn't, and I didn't want you to. I have been kinder holding on in some blind hope that it mightn't be. When Hona came it was like a new lease of life. I thought how nice it would be for you two to marry and settle down, and let old Salt come to your table—you would find a place for him, wouldn't you?—but you'r

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both too young. You've got your way to make and you have not struck the right road. You must begin all over again, and toil up and on, and in the years many things may happen. But let me tell you, my boy, whatever does happen, there's one man who'll stand by you. There's one—there's——” But Mr. Salt had caught sight of Adam's eyes swimming in tears, and suddenly his own emotions broke forth in a sob, and he arose to go from the room, but when he saw Adam bend his head on the table he came back and placed his hand on the young man's shoulder.

XVI

WHEN WOMEN ARE DIFFERENT

SHORTLY after Adam Rush moved from Samuel Salt's to the Crawford residence the Weatherbys—Potter Weatherby having been elected to the Legislature—took a house in Chester. It was comfortable and desirable, but while it was in the better part of the town, it was not in the best part.

It suited Potter, but Hona felt the difference. It was her first experience with social geography. In Wheatley she had been as good as anybody. Why not in Chester?

The iron went deep into her soul. The people who called were pleasant, but they were not from the houses visited by Adam Rush and Paul Bradson. Mr. Salt was cordiality itself, but Mr. Salt circled in the wider orbit. Paul called and took her driving, but she noticed that he did not go through the main street of the town, and she hated him for it without knowing why. Adam escorted her to church, but she observed that the Crawford pew was empty, and her pride was so hurt that she could even accuse

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him. And then when he did not call so often, she could not understand, and she blamed him.

But Adam was undergoing one of the hardest experiences of his life. He was trying to grow accustomed to the new home and to make rapid progress with his studies at the same time. Thus it was that Constance came intimately into his life. She endeavored so hard to make him feel like one of the family that she got well over the line and began to crowd the young man. She was unselfish in her interest, but Adam could not abolish the personal equation. There was a perfectly clear explanation for her, even though Adam did not understand. In the first place, she was a woman with a heart for a young man who was making a struggle for success in life. In the second place, she was a young woman with responsibilities and ideas. And in the third place, she was a modern person of the feminine gender who decided and acted concurrently and argued it out afterwards—if she had time.

Adam began with a fear of her, but this was quickly changing to a profound and increasing respect.

With Hona everything was different. She was not connected with his studies. She had come to Chester with the thought of being near Adam. Old

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memories had clung to her so faithfully that she could not easily accept new conditions. The Adam with the solemn face was not the Adam she used to know. Her own beauty had grown. Adam was not so handsome as when he left Wheatley. He had changed in other ways. He thought of law and hard old questions which were of no earthly interest to her.

Adam was full of conflict. With Hona he did not feel as he once did. He did not understand it himself. They met and there was a condition like unto the tide at the slack, and each seemed to be waiting for the other to start the current of conversation.

But in the Crawford home Adam was in a constant state of expectancy. Constance seemed as ubiquitous as a draught, pouring in from unlooked-for directions and bringing refreshment with surprise. He never saw any one pursue so many things with such vigor and relentlessness. It was through her that the changes in the Crawford house had come. Old houses have their own wildernesses and their own cemeteries. Who is the unhappy mortal that has not spent childhood hours in the forests of forgotten garrets, or revelled in joy and excitement when digging buried treasures—queer bottles or old toys—from the dark corners of the cellars?

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After Mrs. Crawford died the house had its neglected quarters, its cobwebs, and its dust-covered caskets, and these increased through Constance's girlhood ; but when she came from college and entered upon her career as the head of the home, the cobwebs came down, the dust flew away, and the ghosts of the nooks and the rafters had to go. Mr. Crawford declared, amid the frenzy of it all, that if cleanliness was really next to godliness their residence ought to be moved to the vacant lot adjoining the church.

In a word, there was almost madness in Constance Crawford's method. She drove her father from the disorders in which he was entrenched until he made his final stand on the threshold of his office. "So far may thou come and no farther," he declared. "Do what you please with the house, but spare my den. Touch but a single pile, and I am lost. When I want a paper I can find it, because I know it is on that table. It may be at the top of the heap, or at the bottom, or in the middle, or at the side, but this much I know—it's there, and that's more than the system slave ever knows. He may think what he wants is in one of his innumerable drawers and pockets, but let him try to put his hands on it, and he wanders in his labyrinth like a blind man trying to trace a Boston street.

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"I should think you would be ashamed of such disorder," she said.

"I am, and I glory in my shame."

"You are beyond redemption. I give you up," she declared.

"My precious child, those are the sweetest words I have heard since the cyclonic disturbances reached this house. You take a load of the direst anxiety off my mind." But she had no more time to waste upon him and she closed the door and returned to her duties.

Mr. Crawford smiled and walked to the window. "I'm saved," he said; "but Adam! Poor Adam!"

It was poor Adam, sure enough. He got his own share and all that Mr. Crawford had evaded. He found his clothes folded with the strictest care, his books properly placed, his papers neatly assembled, everything rearranged and improved, as though a little angel—or devil, if you prefer (at first he did)—were following with a measuring-rod, an index, and a whisk broom. But it all told. Adam became more careful, and the angel—or the other—had less to do, and one day Mr. Crawford saw him put back a book, and, instead of shoving it in the tier, even it nicely with the other volumes. Mr. Crawford laughed heartily, and said:

"I see she's got you, Adam. But let me tell you

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right here and now, if you go to bringing any system into this office there will be trouble."

"I don't doubt it," said Adam, smiling at the mound on the big desk.

"Do you know," continued Mr. Crawford, inquiringly, "I half believe the thing that tempted Eve in the Garden and led to man's downfall was not a snake at all, but a tape-measure. The world was free from care and man was entirely happy until system and the yard-stick came."

These lighter moments eased many a load in Adam's breast, but they could do little to aid the greater task that seemed to grow heavier the harder he tried to lift it. If law calls for any one thing more than another, it is well-disciplined intelligence; without it the study is almost like wandering with no chart or compass or knowledge of the stars. Adam had the intelligence, but lacked the discipline; he had not that training which leads from point to point along familiar roads, or which by experience can tell how to follow easily the new paths. In this lay his greatest difficulty, and neither Mr. Crawford nor Constance could adequately appreciate it, for the discipline had come to them from early and continuous training, culminating in the college, where it was fixed for life as a part of their existences.

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It puzzled Constance that a man of Adam's ability had so much trouble in learning, and she began in a way to study with him and to make it convenient to be present when her father was giving some of his informal talks, as he sometimes did in the glow of the open fire before the lamp was lighted.

Not to save himself could Adam help feeling discouraged. He wrote to his mother about it. He brooded over it. In contrast with his mood the commoner surroundings of Salt's store became radiant, and he wished he had never left. He was trying for something beyond him. Why keep at it? Why not return to the farm or to store-keeping and quit this fretting after the impossible? He would never be a good lawyer, because he could never learn law. Oh, it was silly, useless, waste of time, the folly of a bumptious young fool—and he slammed the book against his leg.

"Are you trying to break the law?" called Constance, as she came through the door and stood by his side—she younger than he, a girl, too, and yet one who knew how to study, how to learn.

"I feel like doing it," he confessed, "but the shoe is on the other foot. It is breaking me all to pieces, and causing me to break all my good resolutions."

"What's the difficulty now?"

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"This chapter. I've been over it and over it until my eyes swim, and I don't know as much about it as when I began. I've done everything with it—chased foxes all down the paragraphs, jumped horses over quotations, sold Salt's fresh goods to John Doe and Richard Roe, and gone through choir practice and sung amens at every section."

"Let me see," she said, laughing at his predicament. "Well, that does look hard, but you're going to learn it, you know, and I'll see that you're not disturbed. Will you have a brighter lamp?"

"Oh, no, thank you," he replied. "What I need is a brighter mind."

But she said something about that being all right and went out the other door, for there were two doors to the long room, and Adam sat near the upper one, not far from the window that looked out to the east.

Now that he had confessed his failure, he felt the double necessity of reclaiming himself and earning her good opinion. So he went for the chapter again. He read and he toiled; he committed to memory, and closed his eyes and repeated; he took it by sentence and by paragraph, and the parts would slip and slide in his mind like so many pebbles; do what he could, they would not hang together. Two hours

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went by, and he was farther than ever from an understanding of the chapter. Then his sorely tried temper revolted.

He jumped to his feet, the hated book in his hand, and, without knowing what he was doing in the blindness of his fury, hurled it down the room—and then he started back with a gasp of dismay, for Constance came through the door and picked up the volume.

She was smiling, and began to turn the leaves, all the time walking towards him. He was speechless in the turn matters had taken, and before he could get things right in his twisted mind he sank back into the chair.

Closer still she came, and then she laid the book before him, opened at the detested chapter, and her finger was pointing to it. She smiled again as she said, "Good-night," and faded from the room.

Daylight peeped through the window as the fuzzle-headed young man closed the book, but there was a new look upon his face. For he knew the chapter.

It is not too much to say that the work of that night made Adam Rush a lawyer. It completely invigorated his whole being. He had been on the verge of hopelessness before, but now he knew that he could learn if he worked hard enough, and he

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thanked Constance for having taught him the lesson.

In his new joy he went to Hona, and she was glad to see him in better spirits.

"Come, let us take a walk," he cried. "Let us pretend we are in Wheatley again, and as happy as we used to be."

"Where shall we go?" she asked.

"Anywhere—as far as Wheatley if you can, but of course you can't. You've outgrown your old training."

"I'll not be the first to cry quits," she answered, and they started out, with the stars overhead and the town blinking through its curtained windows. They reached the county road and walked with long and happy strides, and sometimes they sang snatches of song or called as though the dogs were near. Then after awhile they sat on an old log and talked of the old times, while the little stream sang merrily.

"What has changed you so?" asked Adam, suddenly.

"What has changed you so?" she asked, in return.

"Nothing. I am the same. But you are different. I don't believe you would even let me kiss you."

"Certainly not," she replied with emphasis.

"But why?"

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"Because."

"That's only a woman's reason."

"It is enough."

He took her hand and she let him hold it. "Now, Hona dear, don't go to getting silly notions into your head when you know they have no right to be there. Things may change, but nothing can change us."

"You have already been changed," she said.

"In what way, and by whom?"

"By your associations."

"Explain."

"Why should I? You know it—you must know it. You have stepped to another world—you are in the higher circle."

"How foolish! Are we not both in the same world?"

"No."

"Then where am I?"

She turned her beautiful face to his, and he saw how serious she was. "Do you think Mr. Crawford and his daughter would ask my father and me to dine with them?" was her startling question.

"I do not see why not. You are as good as they."

"But would they?"

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"How can I know, Hona? I do not belong to the family."

"You do know," she said, "and you are not cruel enough to speak the truth. I'll answer it for you. They wouldn't do it. Weatherby is Bradson's man, and Weatherby's daughter must not be received—must not even be invited to the reception which takes place next week. Oh, I know, Adam. I have eyes. I have feelings. I have a heart. If you were not the man you are, you might ask me if I thought myself unworthy of them, or of you; but you wouldn't do that, Adam. And I'll answer that question, too. No, I am not unworthy of any human being that lives; and you may call it pride or you may call it whatever you choose, but something in here"—she placed her hand on her bosom and stood erect and beautiful in the moonlight—"something in here tells me that I am as good as any woman in that town. And I won't be snubbed. I *won't!*"

Adam threw his arms around her, crying, "Hona, oh, Hona!"

But she wrested herself from him with the strength of a wild animal.

"No," she said.

They stood looking at each other for a moment, and then Hona turned.

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"Now," she exclaimed, "let's walk." And she strode like a young giantess going to battle. Nor would she diminish her pace. The lights of the town came closer, and Adam asked her to go more slowly so that they might talk, but she kept on as if weariness had never come to her, and it was only when they reached the street that she paused, and as she did so she looked around at Adam, a little in the rear, and found him wiping the perspiration from his brow.

"Oh, I thought you could walk," she cried, merrily. "You need a month of Wheatley air, Adam, you really do."

"Hona, you are the strangest——" He stopped for the want of a comparison.

"Am I? Then I ought to be interesting. And it is so nice to be an interesting person."

"May I come in?" he asked, when they reached the house.

"Not to-night, Adam. Not to-night. I'm really very tired, and I think I'll go to bed."

Adam walked slowly to the Crawford home, and found Constance reading. She smiled as he entered, and drew him into conversation about the story which she had just laid down.

"It's about a man who was trying to choose

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between the woman of his heart and the woman of his mind. What would your decision be?"

"I have not got that far," he replied, with a laugh. "I'm not even admitted, much less on the bench. But I can say one thing—the accused has my deep sympathy."

"He hasn't mine at all," she said. "I pity both of the women, for whichever he chooses he may be sorry he didn't take the other, and one of them is sure to be made unhappy."

"Suppose it were a woman and two men—that oftener happens, you know. What would you say then?"

"A real woman makes only one choice, but men are different."

And, having decided the case, she closed the book and asked Adam if it looked like rain.

XVII

ADAM'S FIRST PUBLIC SPEECH

“**I** HAVE succeeded,” said Mr. Bradson to Paul, “and I want you to profit by my experience. Now, listen to what I tell you. Always use men, never let them use you. Let the others talk; you listen and remember, and don’t have too many compunctions about other people’s good. That is, take care of yourself. If the other fellow allows himself to be run over when the wagon is carrying your goods—why, you’re not to blame. Don’t bother about that. Just keep your eye on the road and drive on, even though in some cases you have to cross property that doesn’t belong to you. That’s the rule of success. It’s not written in the copy-books, but you’ll surely find it in the world. Money makes might and might makes right, and there you are. But when you set traps, don’t fool with them until they are sprung, or you might get caught yourself.”

Mr. Bradson ended abruptly, because one of the workers for the railroad was announced. Paul withdrew.

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"I've seen all our people," said Mr. Bradson, "and they say if we expect them to back the whole road we must make good by carrying the loan. They won't stand for any doubts about how the vote will go. It must be fixed, and they are willing to help us to the extent of fifteen thousand dollars."

"That's not enough," said the man, promptly. "The voters we can buy got a taste of money last fall, and they're like lions with a sip of blood. They know that the road is to get a half-million, and now it's hundred-dollar notes when tens would do before."

"Well, we'll make them push it to twenty thousand, but I don't believe they'll go beyond that."

It was an intricate, yet a perfectly plain arrangement. The most excellent company of respectable directors designed to make for themselves at least one hundred thousand dollars on the five hundred thousand dollars to be voted by the county; they would allow fifty thousand dollars to push the thing through, in ways about which they cared nothing so long as the work was done. To make it more plausible they would cut this fifty thousand dollars in half and direct Mr. Bradson, their active member, to say to his local workers that only that amount was available, and Mr. Bradson without their knowledge would further reduce this sum in

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the full expectation of putting the difference in his own pocket, and of calling for the other twenty-five thousand dollars as the fight proceeded, each acute stage causing him to put on a longer face, while the directors showed the expected reluctance and handed out the cash.

The buying of Washington County was a new era in its history. For generations its good people had lived their lives, had their differences, and made their peace. The jail was often empty; the judges had little to do. There was the quiet life on its farms, the more lively stir in its towns, and the innocent excitements of fairs and camp-meetings. A serenity that knew little of the push and stir of the strenuous life bowed like the sky between its horizons.

But the change was under way. The few thousands that Bradson had spent to elect his legislative ticket fell like blessings. Those who took the bribes were happy in their new prosperity. They became more generous; they wanted more things; they let their appetites eat heartier and their thirsts drink a little deeper. Then they awoke to find that the windfall was only temporary; and they were left desiring more and with only their former incomes to supply a part of their desires. The hunger and the thirst increased through famine, and the moral fences

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being let down, some of them began to trespass on the property of others and to taste the forbidden fruit. So there was more stealing in the county, and other infractions of the law gradually but surely multiplied.

All the while there were men crying that the railroad was needed, that the moss-backs must get off the track, that sleepy conservatism must give way to progress, and that Wheatley must be rescued from its lethargy. The Bradson interests worked with system and with skill. They had the newspapers dealing temperately with the question, asking for the facts, and then answering their own questions by printing statistics supplied by Bradson's bureau. In one way or another the young lawyers were brought into the championship of the scheme. The merchants saw a larger flow of money, and were influenced by the signs of better times.

But there were some who could see that the crowd which had corrupted the county in the election of the legislative ticket were prepared to rob it in the bond issue. They saw the influences that were at work, and then they began to speak out. They wrote letters which the local papers did not dare to turn down. They brought up the subject in the meeting-places of men. They showed that while money

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could reach a part of the people, it could not buy all the people. Jonas Wright again forgot his rheumatism. His was a voice crying aloud in country and in town. He no longer objected to the railroad so much as he did to the cheating of the county.

And so the fight grew in interest, in spirit, in intensity, until meetings began to be held and waves of resentment swept up from the farms and surged around Chester, until Chester itself, one beautiful Saturday afternoon, was the scene of a great gathering of citizens who had come from the four corners of the county to hear the question discussed. The band was brought out to play. There was a stand in front of the sycamore-tree. Packed in the streets around were the people. The lawyers who represented Bradson made their speeches and quoted their figures; the few men from other districts who favored the measure added their word, and then those opposed were supposed to have their turn, but when the veteran figure of Jonas Wright appeared at the front of the platform there were outbursts of disorder, so that his weak voice was swallowed up in the noise; and then, to make it worse, many began to applaud and cry out, "Good for you, old man!" "Three cheers for Jonas Wright!" and the band was ordered to play to keep up the interference.

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Jonas Wright stood there like a statue of iron. He held tightly to the figures which he had compiled to show what the county would lose to a lot of plunderers by voting for the bonds. Something like silence fell and he began again, but the catcalls and the noises arose in louder volume, and those who had gone to the bar-room for the free drinks which the company was surreptitiously furnishing came out to add their shouts and their insults. Still Jonas Wright would not retire. The Scotch determination within him stuck like a bull-dog. He would die in his tracks before he would be driven off. The rioters allowed another silence in order to get a fresh opportunity, and Jonas Wright tried again, but just as the mock applause was rising, Adam Rush stood beside the old man and spoke to him.

Curiosity made the disturbers halt in their interruptions, and at that moment Adam stepped in front of the old man and raised his arm.

"I appeal for fair play," he said, and his voice sounded full and strong over the surging mass of the people. "This is the first time in the history of Washington County when free speech has been denied to any one of its citizens, much less to a man like Jonas Wright, who has always stood for what he believed to be right and righteous."

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There was a renewal of the disturbances. Adam's face grew very white and his lips were closely compressed. He was in for it now, and he would not retreat. After a while another calm came.

"Up to this minute I was for the railroad, believing it would be for progress and education, but now I am against it, for I see that it is for the enrichment of a crowd of scoundrels. I see who you are," he exclaimed quickly, to head off another interruption. "Back of the store is the precious Paul Bradson, doing his father's crooked work. Right in the centre is Burler, hired to lead a lot of you who are too drunk to know what you are doing—drunk on Bradson whiskey. And if you say another word," exclaimed the young man raising his clinched fist, "I'll call you name by name from this platform, and if you want to fight it out there are enough good men right here to give you the best thrashing you ever had. The noise you are making is bought noise, and when you wake up with your headaches to-morrow morning you will realize what fools you have been making of yourselves."

Adam saw Burler trying to start a rush for the stand. The others were holding back, because they feared the result, but Burler kept saying to them, "Come on!"

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Adam knew it must be headed off, and he did the first thing that came to his mind—he sought to make Burler ridiculous.

“I don’t know how much Burler is getting,” he shouted, “but I call you to witness, is he worth it? All in favor, say Yes.”

There was much laughter, but no response.

“All opposed, say No!” and there was a chorus that rolled backward and forward until the crowd was changed into a merry mood. Those around might favor the railroad, but they would tolerate no more drunken disorder.

“You will know I had no intention of saying a word,” added Adam, “for my experience as a speaker is yet to come, but I simply could not sit here and see a man we all respect so brutally insulted. I have known Mr. Wright since I could remember. Most of you know him. There is not a better man in the county. He may not think as you do. I know that I cannot think always as he does. His political principles do not agree with all yours. But when it comes to free speech, there can be no party differences, and when it comes to free whiskey, it is time for you decent people to interfere and let a decent man have his say.”

There was a vigorous clapping of hands—applause in strong contrast to that of the Burler gang, which

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had slunk away and sought Paul Bradson around the corner, only to find that he had disappeared.

Mr. Wright came forward with his manuscript. His figures were incontrovertible; the plan of robbery was shown; the villany was exposed; the lingering horrors of bribery were pictured; but long before he was through two-thirds of the crowd had melted away. The railroad would be a good thing for the county, and that ended it, so far as they were concerned, and there were more interesting things going on than listening to Jonas Wright's thin and droning voice.

When Adam entered the house Constance avoided him. He noticed that her face was flushed, and he wondered what had happened. He went into the office, and was surprised that Mr. Crawford neither spoke nor looked up. He felt very uncomfortable, but said nothing. Going to his desk near the other window, he began to read or to appear that he was reading. After awhile Mr. Crawford asked:

"Adam, why did you do it?"

"Do what, Mr. Crawford?"

"You must surely have known that when you shouted that young Bradson was around the corner doing his father's crooked work he was standing in full sight of the stand, talking to Constance?"

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Adam was dumfounded. For a moment he could not speak.

"Mr. Crawford," he said, finally, "I give you my word that I knew nothing of the kind. The last I saw of Paul he was in the side street, and was doing all he could to push his men along."

"Naturally, considering that his father's interests were at stake."

Mr. Crawford arose and left the room. He was in no humor to help Adam out of his trouble. Constance had been humiliated, and no explanation or apology could wipe away the fact.

Adam put on his hat and went out, determined not to return until matters were cleared up—if they ever could be. He walked down the lower street out of the way of the crowds, and he was suddenly gladdened by seeing Hona approaching; but in an instant he realized that her head was lowered and she seemed to be grieving. As he came near he called and spoke, but she only lifted her eyes brimming with tears.

"Hona, what is the matter?" he asked.

"Don't speak to me," she exclaimed. "The daughter of a scoundrel, am I? Scoundrel—my father—the father I love."

"Bul Hona——"

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"No," she replied, "don't speak to me. Don't ever speak to me again." And she went on, leaving him dazed.

Then he did not know what to do. Likely as not Samuel Salt was as mad as the others. There was Mr. Weir, but he was in love with Constance, he thought, and he would not do. Amid his perplexities Jonas Wright came driving by, and on the inspiration of the moment he decided to get into the old man's carriage and go along with him.

XVIII

A GREAT TIME IN CHESTER

LET the band play!" shouted Burler. "This is the day we own the town and we are all for Bradson. Come on, boys. Let's wake old Chester up!"

"Wake her up!" repeated Paul Bradson. "Everybody is everybody's friend, and the top is off the limit."

"Wake her up!" shouted the others.

"She's been dead too long," came another voice.

"But from this day she lives," exclaimed Burler, in his finest eloquence. "That's right. Start the band again." And the noise rose as it had never risen in the quiet community.

Burler and Bradson had heard of Adam Rush leaving town, and when they were sure that the news was correct they did not lose any time in making all possible capital out of it. They declared that he had run away. He was afraid. He had been insulting on the stand, and he did not want to face the conse-

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quences. Burler, who was drinking champagne with Paul, felt that it was all on his account. His courage rose, and in his boasts he called Rush a coward, but the voice of Major Wilberforce Scott was heard above the din.

"Take that back, you puppy," he shouted. "Adam Rush does not know what it is to be a coward, and he can thrash a whole kennel of you."

But those around held the major and told him that it was not his business, and that he had no right to interfere; and thus matters were patched up for the time.

Paul had kept his head remarkably well. He slipped away for a short time and made a bouquet of the finest flowers that could be found in the garden and the conservatories. These he took to Miss Crawford.

"I did not come to call," he said, as he handed them to her, "but simply to leave these as an expression of my regret for what occurred this afternoon. I cannot even guess why he should have done it, but you must know that I was utterly innocent in the matter, and I can never forget the mortification it must have occasioned you. I am very, very sorry."

"Thank you," she replied. "I do not think it so

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serious as you say, and the flowers are beautiful."

Paul was proud of himself when he left the Crawford place. He had done the right thing in the right way. "Dad will like it," he said.

Then he joined the crowds, shaking hands and extending invitations, and doing what he could to keep up the good humor. There were fireworks, which, while few, were unusual in the town, and all this, with the music, kept the interest going until Chester's bedtime.

After most of the townsfolk had gone to their homes the hilarity reached its height. The members of the band were being kept up by stimulants, and all the late stayers were in for anything that promised fun. Paul was so pleased with his success in taking the flowers to Constance Crawford that his ambition was not satisfied. He wanted to do something for Honora Weatherby. His plan was so good that he kept it all to himself, and gave orders for the half-drunken crowd to form in line with the band in front, and thus he led them all to Potter Weatherby's house, where a halt was made and where the band played with much discordant enthusiasm.

Soon there was a call for Miss Weatherby, and when, after frequent repetitions, it was not answered,

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Paul knocked at the door and demanded admittance.

Potter Weatherby met him. "My daughter is not at home," he said.

They laughed at him.

"Oh, come now, Pot," said Paul, familiarly, "you know you're with us in this celebration; you've got to be with us, you know," he added, with a leer, "and it's no use interfering with our plans. We're serenading Honora, and we want her to know it."

Paul pushed himself into the door, and Burler followed, but they got no farther. Potter Weatherby took each of them by the collar.

"Will you go, or shall I throw you out?" he asked.

"Oh, this is all right," said Paul. "We meant no harm—just having some fun."

"Well, go elsewhere and have it," said Pot, mad all the way through.

Paul and Burler walked down the steps, their feathers a little ruffled, but their jubilant ambitions still on fire.

"We'll serenade the whole town," exclaimed Paul. "Move on and give 'em plenty of music."

"And the rest of you whoop 'er up," added Burler.

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The procession started, but gradually weary ones began to drop out, and it was a dwindled crowd to which Mr. Paul Bradson made a speech in front of the hotel at one o'clock Sunday morning.

When the sun came up some of the citizens who arose with the lark found a few of the stragglers asleep by the wayside. It had been a great Saturday, but the merry-making went with the night. The quiet of Sunday was profound.

Mr. Bradson timed his absences with a view to future contingencies. He was away on Saturday. He remained until Monday, when he returned to give the last orders for the great fight on Tuesday, when the county was to vote for the bonds. His first caller was Potter Weatherby.

"I come to tell you," he said, "that I withdraw from your employment and all your schemes. Here is some of your money, which I consider that I have not earned. Good-day to you."

The dumfounded Mr. Bradson could not summon his senses quickly enough to call Potter back, and it would have been useless for him to try, for Potter was now under the power of another. Hona had asserted her rights and had told her father with blazing words that she would no longer submit to slight and insult, that he should resign at once all

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connection with Bradson, and that he should take her away on the first train Monday morning, there being none on Sunday.

He protested that she was unreasonable, but his opposition was feeble, and it only added fire to Hona's indignation.

"So you want to see me mocked and slandered by a gang of drunken men, do you?" she exclaimed. "And you want to get into the penitentiary, do you? Adam Rush was cruel, but he was right. I shall drag you from this place until this wretched thing is over."

And they went on the morning train, and the telegrams Mr. Bradson sent brought no replies.

Thus it happened that Mr. Bradson had to remain in Chester on Tuesday, the day on which the county voted for the loan, and every minute of the day he felt a strange discomfort. But the dollars had been sown; the men had been bought; the election had been fixed; and the returns that night showed that the county had voted itself into an indebtedness far beyond its means. But it was done, and to that extent Mr. Bradson and Paul were content.

Down Wheatley way different things were going on. Adam stayed Saturday night with Jonas Wright, and early Sunday morning arose and walked the two

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miles to his home. He surprised his father and mother at breakfast. They could not believe it at first, and there were embracings and kisses and tears and outbursts of laughter until the victuals were getting cold, and they sat down because Mrs. Rush made them.

After awhile Adam told them the circumstances that had brought him home. "Of course, I'm very sorry," he added, "but how could I help it? I feel regret that innocent people should have to suffer, especially the young ladies, but I don't see that I was obliged to go around apologizing, when I knew I was in the right. In fact I could not apologize without seeming to retract something of what I said, but I won't take back a word, not even the reference to Paul Bradson."

"My son," said Mr. Rush, judicially, "I believe in this you followed your conscience. More than that, I believe you could not have honorably done anything else. I am proud of you."

Mrs. Rush was squeezing Adam's hand under the table. She had no words. She was doubly happy because her husband had endorsed her son.

"Of course," said Adam, "it rather puts me in a hole. I wouldn't ask to go back to the Crawfords', even if I had to give up the law. But it will not be

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so bad as that. I have confidence enough in myself to work my way to the time for admission, but probably it is best to think over that. I want your advice, father, about one thing. There will be nothing going on of interest to me until Tuesday is over. Bradson has bought the town and the county, and no man or set of men can stop him. The loan is as good as carried. What I would like to do would be to stay down here with you and mother over election day. What do——?”

“Why, of course you will, Adam,” exclaimed Mrs. Rush.

Both men laughed.

“I didn’t ask your advice, mother,” said Adam. “I knew what it would be.” Turning to his father, he continued, “I don’t want to seem to show even the suspicion of the white feather. And I want you to advise me frankly whether to go back to-day or to stay.”

“Stay,” said Colonel Rush. “There’s nothing to be gained by going, and there’s a great deal in being away from a disgraceful event which you can do nothing to stop. Moreover, a day or so here will give you a rest and enable you to get your bearings for your future work. And perhaps we may be able to help you.”

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So while Chester sinned and suffered, Adam Rush was playing like a boy let out of school, walking with his father over the farm, and sitting sweet hours with his little mother, holding her small hand in his big one and telling her of his life, his prospects, and his ambitions.

They were all around the big hearthstone Monday evening, when Adam announced his plans. "I've thought the whole thing over, and particularly the advice and suggestions both of you have given me. In the first place, I do not intend to go back in anybody's home. Do you approve of that?"

They did unreservedly.

"I'll get a room and fight my way along until I am admitted to the bar, and then I'll trust to work and luck."

"It will be very hard on you," said the little mother. "I don't suppose you can, but couldn't you do your studying down here?"

They smiled at the impossibility of it.

"It will be hard," said Colonel Rush, repeating the words, "but, my son, it will be the making of you. I believe you've got it in you, and that you will reach high honors; and I am of the opinion that you will want to do your work in your own way."

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"That is the way I feel, and it seems to me that all this has happened for the best. You can't be free living with somebody else."

So it was decided. The little mother clung to him as long as she could, and at the last moment pressed a package in his hand with a whispered command that he must not open it until he reached Chester.

XIX

THE WIT OF A WOMAN

IT is curious that when we look back upon our lives we almost abhor the instances in which we came near being satisfied with ourselves, the times when we walked with head erect, heart stout, and soul full and unafraid. And yet those moments of pride may be the very best of all, and it may be sinful to be ashamed of them.

The matter came up quite accidentally after Adam Rush's return from Wheatley. He had had in mind for a long time the room he wanted. It was over the hardware-store in the square where most of the law offices were, and it was the back room of the floor. There was a fine large room in front, with a wide passage between that amounted to a small room. He would rent the back room, and until he was admitted and had prospects he would dream of the time when he would need and would have the entire suite. He got the back room at a nominal rental, and then he proceeded to Salt's store to buy the few things that would make it habitable. On his way he found in his pocket the package his mother had given him.

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In it was the money he had sent her from his wages in Chester. But he would not even consider the idea of spending it.

The merchant hailed his former clerk with delight. Adam replied in kind, and then asked :

“How much credit have I here?”

“All you want, I guess. We’re selling things so cheap that we can’t lose much more by giving ’em away. What is it? Going to start a home?”

“That’s about the size of it.”

“You don’t say? All by your lonesome or with a lonesomer?”

Adam explained what he intended doing.

“You’ve no credit for anything like that in this store,” said Mr. Salt, sharply, “not while there’s a room in my house. You’ll give up this idea and live with me—that’s what you’ll do.”

“Why will you not give up your house and live with me?” asked Adam, coolly.

“Well, because I like the idea of having my own?”

“Precisely,” interrupted Adam, with a laugh.

Mr. Salt saw the point and laughed too, but he would not give in. “Anyhow, you’ll come over and take your meals with me?”

“I invite you to board with me,” was the reply.

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They kept it up in this strain until, finally, Mr. Salt turned philosopher. "Well, there's no doubt about it. Home is home, even if the roof leaks."

"It may seem foolish to some people," admitted Adam, "but don't you know, Mr. Salt, it simply fills me with the finest kind of satisfaction to know that I'm going to have a place that I can call my own, even if I do have to pay rent."

Mr. Salt sat a moment in thought and reasoned the thing out. "If we didn't care what people think," he said, "I guess we'd all be pinning angel wings to our shoulder-blades. What people think is the tail to the kite that keeps it from going up the wrong way and coming down too soon. A whole lot of sins are stopped by what people think. We may hate our neighbor worse than Old Nick, but we do a lot of things we would not do if he didn't live next door. But most of that lies along the path of duty—or what we take for duty. Sometimes we do not get enough credit from ourselves. There's more in us than we think, as Sam Travers said when he sat down on a pin-cushion and kept a straight face in company. And we've a right to our little jubilees. The time I wore my first pair of boots I was bigger than any army and all the kings rolled into one. The time I was owner of my first little store I

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wouldn't have traded places with a millionaire. And so it goes. We look back, and these things seem small and foolish, but we wouldn't blot one of 'em out for our last hope of resurrection. So old Salt don't blame you for being proud of your little home—and good luck go with you, my boy!"

As Adam was giving the list of articles he wanted, Mr. Salt chuckled. "While you were away two or three of the young fellers were going around saying they were going to thrash you within an inch of your life, and I think Burler went so far as to kill you a few dozen times—while you were away. Don't you think I'd better add a coffin to the list?"

"That will be enough now," said Adam, with a smile.

"If they do kill you, be sure you let me know. Anyhow, you won't give as much trouble with what you've bought as old Sam Gorsey did to his wife Lizzie. Sam went into a trance, and Lizzie thought he'd died. When Sam come to, Lizzie was sitting on the side of the bed adding up the property. 'Something's missing. Something's missing,' she was saying to herself. 'Yes,' said Sam, seeing it all, 'you forgot to deduct the funeral expenses.' She looked at him, mad all the way through, and said, 'Sam Gorsey, it's mean enough of you to die when you did, but it's

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real cowardly of you to be sending your ghost back to add to a poor widow's sorrows.' ”

But Adam had too much to do to spend the day listening to Samuel Salt's stories, and he hastened away. His lighter mood passed as he approached Mr. Crawford's office. This interview would not be so pleasant. But it had to be gone through, and he opened the door.

“Why, Adam,” exclaimed the lawyer, cordially. “I am very glad to see you. I got your note saying you would spend a few days at home, but I did not understand what you said about seeing me regarding future arrangements.”

“I have come for that now,” said Adam. “I have rented a room, and I wish to know if it will be entirely agreeable to you for me to keep on with my studies in your office until I am admitted.”

The lawyer was silent. His mind ran over the things that had happened. “I fear,” he said, finally, “you have been very hasty. As a man of sense you must know that the incident of the mass-meeting embarrassed both my daughter and myself deeply at the time, but the subsequent happenings fully justified you in what you said. The drunken frolic that followed the meeting was beyond anything in Chester's history, and there is no doubt that Paul Bradson

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led it. But at the time I spoke to you it had not occurred, and I know only too well how a young man may be carried into excesses of speech when he makes his first impromptu effort in public. I am sure we are not prepared for your proposal to leave us. Does Constance know of it?" he quickly asked. And when Adam shook his head, Mr. Crawford continued, "We have enjoyed having you with us, and I suggest that you give up your present idea and let us go along as before."

Adam replied that as he had made his new arrangements, he would prefer to follow them. He thought it would be better in the end, and he was very grateful to Mr. Crawford for allowing him to complete his studies under him. "You see, I shall be with you most of the time any way," was his conclusion.

So it was arranged, and he went to his room in the Crawford home and gathered together his few belongings. Somehow he was very glad Constance was out. For no reason that he could explain to himself, except possibly that he did not want to explain anything to her, he did not care to see her.

To the list of things he had purchased, being the simplest and the plainest, Mr. Salt had added a couch, with a characteristic note: "The compliments of S. S.

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It's holler, and if Burler kills you it can be used as a coffin."

Constance Crawford looked upon Adam's departure first as the impulse of an over-sensitive young person, and next as a danger. She had felt that she had him under her control, that while he did not fill all her expectations, he was being guarded from the temptations that beset young men, and was in training for a fine career. The fact that she liked having near her a healthy, ambitious man, that she gloried in his strength, and delighted in the companionship, was not in her thoughts at all. She was unable to regard the relation in any light save that of her own influence upon him, and at all times the reason she went to him so often when he lived in the house was that she might help him, not that he ever drew her to him. So with the positiveness of her opinion she gathered together many things to say to him at their next meeting—things for his own good.

Mr. Crawford had gone away for an afternoon, and she found Adam in the office. He did not look like one who had done anything wrong. There was not about him any semblance of sin or contrition. If anything he seemed more satisfied with himself. His expression was that of one who was enjoying a new independence, and his feet were on the table in a

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most lawyer-like attitude. Nor did he seem embarrassed when he noticed her presence. The feet went to the floor, that was all.

She sat down and asked him a few questions, which he readily answered, and asked her others in return. It was very mean of him, she said, to leave them, and he met this by an explanation of the mass-meeting incident, which she did not think worth noticing. Then she plunged.

"Adam," she said, "you've given up Sunday-school entirely, and you haven't been going to church regularly. Mr. Weir has spoken of it, and we all miss you."

He thanked her.

"You haven't any idea, apparently, of the great influence a young man of your character and qualities wields in a place like Chester."

"I never thought of such a thing," he said. He was mystified by her words.

"Take, for instance, the mere physical side of it. You are probably the strongest man in Chester. The men say you are. The women admire you for it. You men know little about women," she added, as though instructing him. "Between a merely nice man and a brute, women in their souls prefer the brute because he is strong."

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Adam laughed heartily, and when she flushed, he said, "Please go on. I know you are driving at something, but honestly I don't see what it is."

"Well, then, it's this: I know you're not merely a nice man, and sometimes you're not even nice, qualified or unqualified, but you have shown that you are wonderfully strong, and all men are afraid of you. Now I'll get to my point. We need all your strength, all your powers of mind, and your interest, in the church. You can put this strength to a noble use. God needs you, Adam, and, far more than that, you need Him. You especially need Him now that you have gone from the influence of a home, for I must tell you, my friend, that I believe you are the strong kind who could be as bad as you could be good, and that if you got started the wrong way you might be ruined before any power could stop you. I have been wanting to say this to you, for you know how closely we have come together, and I determined I would say it when father told me of your purpose not to live with us any longer. Now, be frank with me, as I have been with you. Why are you giving up the church?"

Adam looked out the window. "I much prefer not to say," he said. "It is one of those explanations that would do no good—that would simply leave hard feelings and make me regret I'd ever spoken."

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Mr. Adam Rush's mistake was in saying that much. He might just as well have told the whole thing right then and there, for Miss Constance Crawford made up her mind that she would not leave the room until he had said everything she wanted him to say, and so she persevered until he got angry and spoke in quick and earnest sentences.

"Well, if you and Mr. Weir want to know, I will tell you, and perhaps it may do you and him as much good as you are trying to do me. Months ago Potter Weatherby and his daughter moved to Chester. They went to your church. A few men whom Potter knew spoke to them, but a good many he knew avoided him. As for the girl, she might as well have been in a Hottentot camp. People said Pot Weatherby was Bradson's man, and while they bowed to Bradson they slighted Weatherby. You church people did nothing to cultivate Hona Weatherby; you passed her coldly by, you invited her to none of your receptions, you made her feel that she was a heathen whose soul wasn't worth bothering about. Perhaps you don't know her, but I want to tell you, and you may tell Weir and the rest, that I've known her all my life, and that there isn't a purer, better girl that lives. Now you see why I have such a low opinion of your church. I'm much obliged to you

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for thinking I can do some good there, but—no, I have said too much.”

Adam misinterpreted the expression upon the face of Constance, and hastened to add :

“You think I am in love with her, and say these things for that reason. But don’t get a false impression. The last time I saw her she told me not to speak to her. In reality my feelings are deeper on account of her father. I believe him to be a man of honest intentions, and he worships her and she loves him. But what do the good church members do? They salaam to Brother Bradson and wink when the man he has tried to corrupt enters the church. And what is he to do with his daughter? What can he do for her? Oh, it’s no use. I can’t talk about it. But it shows you what sort of a Christian I am. I believe in God, but I don’t believe—no, I won’t say another thing. You’ve got me all wrought up, and I’m going out.”

He grabbed his hat and got as far as the door. Then he returned and leaned over the desk where she was sitting, “Now, Constance, you know I didn’t intend to go on in this way. Try to forget it, won’t you?”

“You’ll keep on going to church?” she asked.

“No,” he said, bluntly, as he closed the door.

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Constance sat and thought awhile and then smiled.

"He will be at church next Sunday," she said.

We have found in Constance Crawford a young woman in whom decision and action were so closely united that the first meant also the second. When she went from the room she ordered the carriage and drove at once to the Weatherbys. Hona was at home, and when she appeared Constance captured her at once. "I really came to call," she said, "but it is such a lovely afternoon that I think it would be sinful to spend it indoors. Won't you, just for my sake, put on your hat and go with me?" And before Hona scarcely realized what had happened she was speeding along with Constance Crawford and enjoying the day and the drive.

Trudging along the street that led Wheatley-way was a young man with his hands in his pockets and his thoughts on the ground. He looked up, and in his bewilderment made a most awkward bow.

He was at church the following Sunday.

XX

AN INTERRUPTED FEAST

AFTER Constance had called upon Hona it seemed to Adam that a reign of peace ought to settle over Wheatley. He was even willing to forgive the reflections which had been cast upon his own courage by Bradson and Burler while he was away from town, and to attribute them to the wine they had drunk. At any rate, the matter was not serious, and he dived deeper into his studies.

But a *status quo* is never satisfactory to the devil or his kind, and it was very tedious to Paul Bradson. He enjoyed the fame he had won. People allowed for his wildness, and graciously said it went along with the great wealth he was to inherit, for the fortune of the senior Bradson went skyward in the local fancy, and grew from hundreds of thousands to millions without any extra effort of the imagination. Why should not a young fellow have his fun when he did not have to work for his living? And was it not creditable to Paul that, although his creature

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wants were all provided for, he was trying to become a member of the bar and do something on his own account? Then he was such a good spender. He was willing to give up the last cent when it came to treating, and to stretch his credit as far as it would go, and there was not a store in the town which did not profit by his expensive tastes. Moreover, he was the best-dressed young man in town and he drove the finest rigs. And thus many declared it a pity that there were not more like him.

Paul considered that he had sufficiently outlived the great orgie of the Saturday preceding the election to take his place once more in good society. The flowers he had taken to Constance on the memorable day lost their fragrance because of the subsequent proceedings of the night, but he felt sure that she was as forgiving as the rest of the town, and so he dressed more carefully than usual and rang the Crawford door-bell. His card was taken and in a few minutes the message was returned:

“Miss Crawford begs to be excused.”

Paul picked up his hat and went out. He was angry all the way through. It was a snub—a plain snub. She wouldn't see him. She wouldn't even temper the blow by sending down word that she was not at home. She made him understand that she

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did not want him to call. He had sometimes fancied the time when she might become Mrs. Bradson ; his father had been pleased with the acquaintance. It was his best hold on the society of the town. And now——

“Oh, well,” he said to himself, “Miss Constance Crawford isn’t the whole thing by a vast majority. She’ll regret it. I’ll bet a hundred she’ll regret it.” Somehow he connected Hona with his own discomfiture. Then he thought of her beauty, and agreed with himself that she was the finer girl, and that it was silly for him to be grieving about Constance Crawford when such a lovely creature as Honora Weatherby was within his reach.

So he turned down the street and went to the Weatherby house. Perhaps he may have met with a fate similar to that which befell him earlier, but it happened that Hona herself opened the door and he walked in without an invitation.

He began the conversation somewhat bombastically, but had not gone very far when he realized that his words were falling upon unresponsive ears. Gradually his anger began to boil inwardly. The idea of Hona being indifferent to his presence and attention did not comport with his dignity.

“Soon you’ll be getting into high society, I sup-

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pose?" he said, abruptly, with a laugh. "I hear that Miss Constance Crawford called on you."

"Miss Crawford called," she said.

Paul pulled his young moustache and exclaimed, bitterly, "I called to see her to-night, but she sent down word that she was not at home."

"Then you came here?"

"Yes."

"Why?"

"Oh, I feel that I've a right to come here whenever I please, you know."

"Who said so? What gives you the right?" asked Hona, flaming up.

"Oh," he replied, "what's the use of being so touchy? You know as well as I do. Where would you and your father be if it had not been for us?" Paul always assumed partnership in his father's big things.

"A great deal happier," she replied; "and I want to tell you, Mr. Paul Bradson, that your money has no hold on me and no attraction for me; and I want to say, further, that my father has had nothing to do with your father or his plans since——"

"Oh, I know that Pot gave up just before the fight, and you know what we think of people who do that. I know that he 'resigned' and that you went

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away—ran away, we thought. But that does not cancel things by a long shot, and all your high talk won't alter the fact that your father is still in our power. Of course it's brutal to say these things, but I don't intend to allow you to crow over me here as you used to down in Wheatley, nor to ignore me either. I want you to go driving with me to-morrow, I really do. I'll leave now, and in the mean while I think you'll decide to go. Perhaps you've decided now."

Honora turned her back upon him and passed out of the room. He stood for a few minutes waiting for her to return, but he heard a door slam up-stairs, and knew that there was no other course for him but to depart.

All the devil in him was now aroused, and he would make the night drown his thoughts. So he sought Burler and Newill and a few others, and ordered a supper with plenty of wine in the private dining-room of the hotel.

Adam Rush was studying long after his usual hour. The stores had closed, and the passing footsteps were few. After awhile in the silence he heard a noise on the steps, and then there was a timid knock on the door.

"Come in," he called.

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Hona stood before him, with a hood over her head, very pale and trembling.

She tried to smile, and looked around his little den from curiosity. "I had nobody to send, and I wanted to see you," she said. "I was so afraid some one would recognize me. Come, let's get out as quickly as we can." And Adam was only too glad, for something of weakness came upon him when he thought what might be said of the visit of a lovely young woman to his room at that time of the night.

They reached the street, and no one was in sight. They breathed freer when they felt that their escape was secure and unseen. At first they walked along without saying anything. Adam was quiet, waiting for what Hona had to say. Hona was quiet, because she was trying to think how to say it.

"I know how it is," said Adam, finally; "you've got something to tell me and it sticks. Let's talk of other topics and then presently it will come—unless it is immediately important."

Hona laughed.

"Why do you laugh?" he asked.

"I can't help noticing how you are getting to use big words," she said. "No, it is not immediately important."

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They talked of things that were neither immediately nor remotely important until they reached Hona's home, and then they entered the parlor.

"Now," he said, "what is it?"

"It isn't anything," she said, trying to laugh. "When I come to think it over, I was very silly to go for you, but somehow I had to go, just to get near some one I could trust."

"Bradson," said Adam. "What has he been doing? Was he here to-night?"

"Yes."

Adam looked to the ceiling and remained silent.

"He said several things that were—were—not pleasant," began Hona; "but they did not make so much difference. What troubled me was his insinuation that papa was still in his power; that—well—that we both were still in their power."

"How?"

"Money, of course. It's always money."

"You have never received anything from either Bradson or his father?"

"No," she exclaimed, with fine scorn.

"And, as I understand it, your father went to Bradson before election, settled with him, and declined to have anything further to do with his schemes."

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"I made him do it," said Hona, with pride.

"Well, why should you bother?"

"Because I didn't know, Adam, because I didn't know."

"But you do know now, and you must promise me that you will not fill your pretty head with any more of these fears." He arose to go, but suddenly turned and faced her. "You have not told me all. What did he say to you?"

"I forget," she replied, "but I turned my back on him and left the room."

As Adam went up the street his feelings had a different and a more intense direction. The very indefiniteness of Hona's reply magnified the incident into a gross insult. Then the accusations of cowardice which Bradson and Burler had made against him, and which he had striven to forget as being beneath his notice, arose like a storm cloud. A single wind is never very dangerous, but when two winds meet, then comes the tornado. Thus it is with human passion.

Adam went to the hotel. He asked Major Scott, who was sitting under the sycamore-tree, if had seen Bradson and Burler.

"Oh, yes," replied the major; "they are in the private dining-room raising the mischief generally."

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The etiquette of invading the privacy of a group of young gentlemen did not enter the thoughts of Adam Rush. He was too angry for that. His temper was ruling him; his blood was flowing hot; and he had no thought of conventions or consequences.

When he opened the door, Newill invited him in, but he stood like a statue taking in the group. Paul Bradson was on his feet unsteadily, holding a wine-glass and trying to offer a toast.

"Just in time to hear it," he shouted, "and now all of you listen: Here's to the prettiest girl in Chester. Whatever the weather be may the weather be as fair as she."

The others began to applaud, but before they could express their appreciation of the silly pun in words, Adam advanced and said, "Stop!"

Paul closed his eyes and guffawed. "This is my feed, and I'll toast whom I please: Here's to bootiful woman—bootiful woman, every good man's opportunity; bootiful Norah Weath——"

But he got no farther. Adam's fist landed squarely in Paul's face. Down went the young man, with the wine spilling over him and the glass broken in fragments.

The others cried "Shame," and closed around the

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intruder, but they were dealing with a madman, with brain ablaze and muscles like iron.

Major Scott heard the noise and rushed in. He understood the situation at a glance. Grabbing Adam by the shoulders, he pushed him out of the room. Then locking the door, he looked around.

But it was not until the next day that Major Scott described it all to the faithful circle around the sycamore-tree.

"By the great horned spoon," declared the major, "I never saw anything like it in my born days. Gentlemen, you don't know what you missed, and I don't believe I can tell you. I've been on the Rio Grande when a 'norther' swept down and carried huts and animals through the air like pieces of paper. I've camped on the coast of the Gulf of Mexico and seen a hurricane lift a sloop five miles inland. I've been on a Kanaas prairie and witnessed a cyclone in its act of shifting residences and live-stock and population. But all of it put together was nothing compared with the scene in that room. It looked as if three of a kind—the norther, the hurricane, and the cyclone—had made one fell swoop and tangled dishes and bottles and food and boys in one fearful conglomeration. Paul was in one corner soaked with wine and gravy and holding his hand to a bad eye.

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Two others were helter-skelter with the chairs and crockery. And Burler—oh, Burler was a sight for the angels. He had a whole corner to himself with the table for breastworks and most of the supper had slid down upon his precious person, until it was hard to tell whether he was a human being or a garbage heap. I stood there and just laughed, and not one of 'em spoke a word, until Burler peeped up and asked, in a terribly scared voice :

“ ‘Has he gone?’

“Then I said, ‘Well, boys, you seem to have had something of a time.’

“Still they couldn't talk about it. ‘What was the matter? Too much applause?’ But even that did not fetch them.

“ ‘Crawl out; crawl out,’ I said. ‘The storm has passed. The lion has been sent to his cage. It's only old Scott, and he's your friend.’

“When they got up they were the most distressing-looking crowd I ever set my eyes on. Honestly, it was pitiful; and when they saw me laughing, they all began to get mad.

“ ‘We'll kill him,’ said Paul, after he found that he was not in the room.

“ ‘We'll kill him,’ repeated Burler, wiping the mayonnaise dressing from his moustache.

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“‘Now, boys,’ I said, ‘I wouldn’t do it to-night, if I were you. It seems to me that you’ve had just about as much as you need for one evening, and what’s more, I’m going to see that you get to bed before any more damage is done.’

“Well, I helped them out and saw about rooms for them, and I guess they’re sleeping it off; but it was a sight, oh, it was a sight.”

“They ought to have had more sense than to tackle such a fellow as Rush after the way he throwed Bill Story out of Salt’s store,” said one.

“Do you think there’ll be any more of it?” asked another.

“Not unless they tackle him—and God pity them if they do,” said the major.

XXI

THE ETIQUETTE OF THE DUEL

FATE was more than kind to Adam in the events that followed the supper episode. An unexpected incident gave a different turn to the interests of the town.

It may be that the editor of the *Chronicle* felt a little hurt at not being invited to the supper or he may not have cared one way or the other, but when he heard Major Scott's version of the proceedings repeated, the temptation to put it in print was too great for human resistance. So he wrote a capital account of it, carefully suppressing names. This he had set up in type on Wednesday, and that night he took the proof of it with him to the hotel. It dropped from his pocket. After that it was public property, and it was read a dozen times during the evening, each rendition growing more hilarious.

Bradson and Burler entered the bar-room at eleven o'clock, just as the account was again being read to the increased satisfaction of the crowd. The screen hid them from view, and they heard not only the words but the comments and the guffaws.

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It was maddening, but they had sense enough to creep out before being seen. A half-hour later they were in Burler's office over the stable, discussing a proper and effective course of procedure. Everything from tar and feathers to assassination rioted through their minds, but along towards morning they came to the conclusion that they ought to do something with dignity in it that would serve to re-establish them in public respect. Very curiously this led to a challenge to the editor. Burler argued that the editor was a coward, and that, being a coward, he would decline to fight; thus he would fall into his own trap, and they would be vindicated. The sun rose and morning fled before they found the wording that suited them, and then Burler went forth to deliver the message.

That was Thursday. He performed his mission and no one was the wiser except the editor and the two who had sent the defiance. The *Chronicle* was issued on Friday, and, as gossip had spread the news of the coming report, there was universal interest in the issue. The public did not have any cause for disappointment, for, in addition to the item about the scrimmage, there was an editorial, which read as follows :

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"THE PROPER ETIQUETTE FOR DUELS

"A regrettable mishap occurred to a news item which appears on another page this morning. In some way a proof of it reached the public before being published in its proper time in the *Chronicle*. Dire consequences have followed, as will be gathered from the letter which we append, and which was delivered to us in person by the messenger it named :

"*To the Editor of the Chronicle :*

"SIR : The substance of an item which you will doubtless publish in your scurrilous sheet has been reported to me, but whether published in the regular way or not, you have perpetrated an insult which you must answer for. You cannot escape responsibility. You are a low cur and a contemptible blackguard, and Mr. —, who bears this will act for me.

"Respectfully,

"— — — — —."

"As there are no names in our news item which drew forth this terse but evidently earnest communication, we shall preserve the same anonymity in the preliminary stage of what may prove a ghastly tragedy, and we beg to assure our readers that they would not be bothered with a long and possibly tedious statement did we not feel obliged to confess our own difficulties.

"In our humble way we strive to abide by the customs and conventionalities of our time and environment, and although the code duello is not a popular institution in this peaceful community, we shall not offer that as an excuse for backing out of any moral or physical obligation, nor, indeed, do we desire

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to make such a retrograde movement. But we must insist that if we are to die young the funeral shall take place only under circumstances of the most rigorous enforcement of the proper etiquette that belongs to an acutely critical occasion. We should no more think of pursuing these arrangements without a faithful compliance with the rules than we would of going to a *soirée* in overalls. In order, therefore, to make our position clear we beg to affix the details.

“Early Thursday afternoon a person, whom we will call Mr. Dash, being the same one mentioned in the note we have quoted, sent a card to our sanctum. It is our invariable rule, when the card contains ‘Mr.’ before the name, to put on our Sunday coat, which hangs within reach for emergencies, such as the visits of Presidents, governors, and members of the *élite*. If the name stands in its naked simplicity, or is attached to a business announcement, we command the office-boy to tell the visitor to climb the stairs, look out for the blind step, and walk right in. The card received was a stained sample of the printed kind advertised in story-papers for twenty-five cents a hundred, and it contained nothing to indicate an acquaintance with proper social forms.

“We naturally sent the usual message, and in a few minutes a person, fresh from the barber’s chair, embellished and perfumed our modest establishment. We bowed, and he came forward and placed in our hands the letter, saying with much impressiveness, ‘I will wait for an answer.’

“We read the letter, and then we gazed admiringly at the messenger. He would have been fair to look upon if he had not been a brunette, with a brigand moustache. He wore a sack coat, a made necktie flaring red around a choker collar,

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and instead of an unobtrusive shirt-stud there was a piece of glass as big as a beech-nut. His hat was not in the mode, and his gloves, instead of being kid, were of unmistakable dogskin. Moreover, his vest was cut high, and he wore buttoned gaiters.

“This, we respectfully contend, was not the proper costume for a man conveying from one gentleman to another a challenge to engage in mortal combat. From time immemorial the dress for the duello has been carefully conventionalized. The second, or the acting party in the preliminaries, should wear either a stove-pipe hat or a sombrero ; his coat should be of gloomy hue, and should have tails ; his vest should be cut almost to the last button, and a black string tie should wander from a turn-down collar along the crest of the shirt-bosom and wave gently to and fro, so as to show the small gold studs. And, most important of all, his gray trousers should be tucked into long-legged boots resplendent in fresh applications of goose grease, and on these boots should be a pair of clanking spurs.

“So much for him. Now as to us.

“We, of course, were not expecting this particular kind of a visit, but we contend that we were approximately in trim for it. We had removed our coat, our vest, and our collar ; our suspenders were resting from their responsibilities. We were, therefore, in the sartorial condition exacted by the strictest French rules for the very duel itself. We do plead guilty to carpet slippers, but there is nothing in the etiquette of the duello that forbids them. Practically we were ready for the conflict, but our sense of propriety would not allow us to proceed until the other party's representative had attired him-

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self in conformity with the delicacy and importance of his mission. Permit us to catalogue our position :

“1. The challenge should have been sent by mail. It would have cost only one cent, and the government needs encouragement.

“2. The omission of the ‘Mr.’ on the card was grossly inexcusable. We might waive the fact that the name was not engraved, but the omission of the ‘Mr.’ never.

“3. The dress was clearly in violation of social law, from the crown of the derby to the tip of the buttoned gaiters.

“4. The bearer was nervous. In duels a second has distinctly no right to be nervous ; he should stand like Ajax and speak with a voice of thunder.

“More reasons might easily be cited, but these will suffice for the time. We did not hasten to reply to Mr. Dash, and he presently added, ‘I will wait for an answer.’

“‘Very well,’ we said, and we continued our work.

“Time passed, and Mr. Dash shifted from one foot to the other in a manner which indicated weariness. Finally, he spoke again, this time asking, ‘When will it be ready?’

“We kept on writing, for time was precious, and once more he spoke, propounding another question : ‘How long shall I wait?’

“‘We really do not know,’ we said ; ‘but we close at six.’

“Then Mr. Dash left, and if there were anything needed to entirely corroborate his unfitness for his task, his departure furnished it. He did not stamp down the steps, rattling his spurs and muttering large oaths. It is, we contend again, the plain duty of the second to stamp down the steps, rattle his spurs, and say, ‘By my halidom!’ or something worse.

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Instead of that, Mr. Dash crept down as gently as a small boy retreating from the preserve pantry—and we have not seen him since.

“Under these circumstances the duel is postponed until the second secures appropriate clothes and a pair of spurs, and takes something for his nerves. All of which is respectfully submitted, with the assurance to our readers that we shall always be ready to respond to the call of duty when it comes properly dressed.”

“I suppose you’ve read Stow’s editorial,” said Mr. Crawford to Adam.

“Yes.”

“It’s crude, but the idea is all right, and I think we have heard the last about any fight. I understand that both Bradson and Burler claim that they knew nothing of it, and that no such challenge was written by either of them, and that Stow concocted the whole thing.”

“Yes, it was the easiest way out of it, and it simplifies the trouble for all concerned.”

“Who were concerned?” asked Constance. She was in the office and heard the conversation.

“Oh,” laughed her father, “if Bradson and Burler and Stow were in it, I don’t see why the rest of the community should not be included. They seem to be running Chester just now.”

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But there was another, and, as often happens, the innocent suffered. Hona thought over the matter constantly. She looked for Adam, but he did not come. Then when the paper appeared she decided that she would leave Chester; that she would go to the city and take lessons in music, and fit herself for a career. And when Adam left the office and went to his room, the note he found on the table contained only these words :

“Thank you, my dear friend, and good-by.

“HONA.”

XXII

MR. CRAWFORD'S ASSISTANT

AFTER Chester had enjoyed a good laugh it managed to settle down to its normal condition. But still it was not the same old Chester. The building of the railroad was under way, and the operations brought new life to the town, more trade to the stores, and more noise around the hotel.

Time was drawing near for the meeting of court, and both Adam and Bradson were candidates for admission. Each was working his best. Each wanted to win, and, whatever faults Paul may have had, there was no mistaking his mental qualities when they were concentrated upon study. And if he had occasional dispositions to let up and enjoy himself, Newill held him rigidly to his task and placed before him the danger of failure, with the effectual warning that Adam Rush might excell him.

As it was, both young men passed good examinations.

The judge was especially gracious to Adam. He mentioned his grand-uncle's name, and added, "If

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you do even half of his good work, sir, you will be an honor to this bar and a blessing to the country, for your distinguished kinsman never championed a bad cause nor used the processes of the law to protect a guilty man."

Adam walked home with Mr. Crawford. When they were seated in the office the old lawyer settled down in the unmistakable way Adam knew so well. It meant a talk of some importance. He congratulated Adam on his success and then went on :

"You know the story of the dragons' teeth. Well, you also know what Bradson's dollars have done. Sowed in bribery and corruption, they have produced their legitimate harvest. The jail has more **prisoners** than it ever had since it has been built, and this is only the beginning. I have studied political conditions and criminal statistics all my life, and it has never failed that when a community or a county or a State is bought—such as Washington County has been—there follows a long and enlarging series of crimes. If I wanted to smash all the ten commandments at once, I'd go in for Bradson's kind of politics. Of course, this means a lot of extra work in this office, and I ask you to help me—to be my assistant, in fact."

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"I am heart and soul with you in the work," replied Adam.

"Another thing," said Mr. Crawford. "You will no longer receive the pay of a clerk. Your income will make you more independent."

Adam thanked him over and over again for all his kindness, and especially for the new place and opportunity. The pay of an assistant solved his financial difficulties, and, moreover, he had assurances from Mr. Salt that he might have his collections just as soon as he could practice.

Adam went from Mr. Crawford's to his landlord and rented the two other rooms. Now he would have the whole floor. He felt a new elation. He lolled in the single swinging chair and looked around. It seemed better and greater than anything he had ever known. There came to him the sweet feeling of ownership, the distinct conviction that it was *his*, that the charity or the kindness or the adventitious aid of any one else did not cast a shadow—be it ever so light or well-meaning—over him or his castle. He was out in the world now, and he would fight his battle from his own fort.

He delighted in work. He gave himself to it with glad enthusiasm, and in the intoxication of his own activity he forgot many of the things that used to rest

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upon his heart. Success was the goal, and duty's steep path was in the broiling sun, while love's smooth road wandered beneath the shade.

And yet, with all the work, as the weeks went by there was a constant longing for something great, for a big task that would require all the strength within him, and not a lot of little things, like Samuel Salt's collections or the minor cases which came from the State's Attorney's office. Adam's mental agility raced beyond his practice. Then came dreams, thoughts, ambitions, possibilities.

Mr. Crawford's health failed, and the bulk of the work fell upon Adam. When in doubt he consulted his chief, and some evenings, when he had to remain in Mr. Crawford's office because he had the books which Adam did not possess, Constance would come in and go over the cases with him, just as she used to study as he was studying. Indeed, so closely had she kept up with the course that she might easily have passed the examination which had admitted Adam to the bar. And in some things she was quicker than Adam. Her intuition jumped ahead of his judgment. Whenever this happened, however, Adam would not be satisfied until his judgment caught up with her intuition. He did not understand the heaven-born quality in woman which man

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does not possess, and he was too stubborn to trust it. But that was not Adam's individual fault—it's the habit of the sex.

Mr. Crawford and Adam saw in their work the fruits of Bradson's crime. More than once they declared what a consolation it would be to bring the author of the downfall of weaker men to the bar of justice. But what was the use of trying? Bradson was rich, respected, honored, looked up to by the State; he was a leader of modern enterprise. He travelled in a special car and distributed his largess with the generosity of a prince. The weaklings who had taken his money, who had sold their sense of shame, and had stepped from dishonor to the breaking of the smaller laws were caught and ignominiously prosecuted—and Mr. Crawford and Adam were doing the work—but the proud and prosperous Mr. Bradson was holding his head high, and felt not the least fear of the law. Why should he? He was safe. He had given nothing to any one to vote for his schemes. He *was* a practical man—he admitted that—but the actual work of low politics was beneath him; it would soil his fingers; it would stain his irreproachable gloves.

But one morning Jonas Wright walked into Adam Rush's office and asked Adam to lock the door. His

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pockets bulged with papers. He sat down and took his own time in beginning his narrative.

"You've chased foxes, and you know their tricks," he said. "They've got more holes than one, and they've got more strategy than a general. But a good dog never gives up, and keeps on because he knows that there will come a time when Mr. Fox thinks he is safe, and then he's caught. I've had a chase, my son, I've had a chase."

"I heard that you had been very busy, and then again I heard that you had been in the city for several weeks."

"All of which is true. Now I am ready to report, and I want to go over the whole matter with you before we bring anybody else into the case." And Jonas Wright drew from his pockets bundles of envelopes and laid them in order on the table.

As his recital proceeded a grim delight filled the soul of Adam. After the election in which the bond issue was decided everybody accepted the verdict—as everybody usually does—everybody except Jonas Wright. Everybody knew that money had been spent in large quantities, and thought that, as it had carried the day, there was no further use in bothering about it—everybody except Jonas Wright. Everybody looked upon the corruption as a closed incident,

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which, it was hoped, would never again disgrace Washington County—everybody except Jonas Wright.

For Jonas Wright had hunted foxes, and, more than that, Jonas Wright was Scotch to the backbone, with the scent of the fox-dog and the grip of the bull-terrier.

So, while others were forgetting that Bradson's money had corrupted a county, Jonas Wright was working out the evidence as to how he did it and through whom he did it. He had many of the notes which had been paid, and he had witnesses as to the receipt of the notes from the parties who had been bribed. Very cunningly had the old man collected his facts. Then he went to the city. He traced the notes from the government to the bank. He found that they had been paid out to the order of Bradson. He secured an admission that the directors had voted fifty thousand dollars for the success of the loan in Washington County. He had their names; he had the names of the bank officers; he secured the names and addresses of five of the workers whom Bradson had brought to the county for the distribution of the money. He had everything, even to the confession of three men who had been bribed, and who would testify if granted immunity—everything and everybody apparently except Pot Weatherby. "I know

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Pot was in it," said the old man, "but he must have been the slickest of the lot, for I haven't been able to find a trace of him."

Adam was amazed at the wonderful precision of Jonas Wright's methods.

"I guess they'll pay pretty dear for hooting an old man at a public meeting," Mr. Wright said, with a heave of satisfaction when he had gone through his papers and explained everything to Adam. "I'll never forget what you did then, my boy, and that is why I am trusting all this to you. Crawford is all right, but he's sick. He hasn't got the energy. What is needed now is a young man with a cool head and plenty of fight. They'll have about all the lawyers, but I don't believe they can scare you."

Adam thanked him for his confidence. Then he suggested that Mr. Wright stay in town, and that they spend the evening going over the case with Mr. Crawford. This was done. Mr. Crawford added his own words of amazement to those of Adam. "It is wonderful, Mr. Wright, wonderful, sir," he said.

Court would meet again the next week.

Then the grand jury got to work. Its sessions lengthened. Its members were solemn. Public expectation began to feed on rumors. Perhaps some of the fellows who sold their votes were going to be

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hauled up. Well, it was always that way, the gossipers whispered. The little ones got caught, but the big fish went free.

Mr. Bradson still rose in popularity. He prophesied in the papers that Chester's population would be doubled within five years. Chester would be an important point along the road, the entrepôt for the Wheatley district. He himself had worked hard for these ends. He needed a rest. He was thinking of a trip to Europe. So when he announced that he would leave by the afternoon train many citizens went to cheer him, and they called for a speech.

"My friends," he said, when he appeared upon the platform of his car, "I am not a speaker; I try to be a doer. But in thanking you I want to congratulate you all on throwing off the old habits of mossbackism and getting in the line of progress. We will make a new country out of Washington County. We shall have a finer prosperity. And I know you will meet all this in the proper spirit—in the same spirit that you showed by your generous votes last fall. And I——"

A man had been making his way through the crowd, and when Mr. Bradson saw his determination to reach the car, he became uneasy and stopped his speech.

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"What do you want?" he asked.

"Read this," was the reply.

Mr. Bradson turned pale, then he nervously told the conductor, who was standing behind him, to cut off his private car. He had an important message that would detain him in Chester. He did not say what it was, but he was under arrest. The breaker of laws was in the hands of the law.

XXIII

AN EVENTFUL NIGHT

BENEATH the genial surface of Mr. Crawford were large ideas and stern purposes. In his earlier life they had ruled. As the years came he dipped deeper into philosophy, and smiled at the folly of thinking that a cursed spite had been born in him to set the world aright. But when the little things annoyed the most, the occasional opportunity that came for the greater effort filled him with delight.

Especially the case of Bradson. It had genuine value. The small end of it meant the capture of a few petty bribers and a few weak men who had been bribed. But the broader view represented a situation that reached every interest of the community and every avenue of its welfare, and the point was to drag the chief offender from behind his money-bags, and to place in the pillory of publicity the main rascal of the lot—Bradson himself.

He went over the case minutely with Adam. "Bradson's counsel will force the trial now because I am ill, and they have retained the best men of the

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bar," he said. "So you will know how much I believe in you when I tell you that I am going to put the whole thing in your hands. I do this because I have confidence in you, and because I feel you will keep your head and win out. When a man is in the right he need not bother about the number of his adversaries. And you need not be scared by the imposing strength of the defence. Bradson is guilty; we have the proof, and you can handle the case."

"I'll do my best," said Adam.

For the defence were Hon. Mortimer Long, formerly Attorney-General of the State, other distinguished lawyers from the city, and all the available counsel in the county except Major Wilberforce Scott. Bradson's counsel moved for a swift trial and a prompt acquittal. Mr. Crawford's illness they took advantage of, and they smiled almost with pity upon the young man, Adam Rush.

When it became known that Adam was to handle the case, Major Scott made his way to his office.

"I'm a bit rusty, my boy," he said, "but I'd like to be in the fight. I thought, perhaps, you'd let me assist you."

Adam looked up with a question in his eyes.

"Oh, I know, my boy. But somehow I feel that I'm going to be of use to you. I just wanted you to

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feel that I am with you. You won't mind me coming around."

"Not at all, major."

It is not within the province of this story to go into legal details, which could interest few, or to give even a résumé of the sensation that filled many columns in the newspapers, or even to tell about the flurry and flutter that followed the summoning of the directors, the bank officers, and the politicians and lobbyists to testify in the case. The lawyers and the others around Mr. Bradson buoyed up his hopes, and Paul was proud and important in the distinguished company of his father's counsel. It was a great time for Chester, and street opinion ran cordially with Bradson and his followers, who were spending money liberally. And the first day passed.

After Adam left the court-house he went directly to the Crawfords'. He had a talk with Mr. Crawford, who endorsed his day's work. Some important points had to be covered and other papers prepared. Constance was ready to help, and they were soon deep in the work. The supper-bell rang, and they stopped only long enough to eat a hurried meal. Then they returned to their labors. Daylight went and the lamps were lighted. Still they worked on. Constance was a rapid and clear writer, and she did

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much of the copying. Occasionally Adam dictated to her. She was as deep in the case as he was. Both did not realize how hard they were toiling. Presently he looked at her.

"Do I look as tired as you?"

"I don't know," she replied, "but I am sure you do."

"Then let's get out in the air. If we do this sort of thing at the start, we won't last."

They went down the hill and over the bridge into the calm of the evening, and then across the mill-dam, pausing at the flood-gate, where they sat on the big timber and rested.

"I distinctly don't like that General Long," she said. "Why is he a general? Was he in the war?"

"He was attorney-general, and the title delights him. You can see what a peacock he is by his waxed moustache and dainty handkerchiefs, and I honestly believe he uses cologne."

"Worse and worse," she said.

"Well, now you open an opportunity for me. This General Long is the trick-horse in their team; he is the chief joker, their—well, he is the one they are going to put forth to ridicule us all, and by us I include you. He began it to-day by referring to the delicate handwriting of the gifted adversary, and

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expressing his delight that the hardships of the law were to be softened by the tender touch of an unseen hand, and all that sort of thing. Now, it will increase as the trial goes on, and I want you to tell me what you would prefer, to have me ignore it or wait for my opportunity and then——”

“I wish——” she began.

“Well?”

“That I were really in the case with you—there at your side, I mean.”

“You are,” he said. “Every minute I feel your strength.”

“I would like to be *there*. Then you would not have to bother about Mr. Long.”

“What would you do?”

“About what you will do, I suppose. Wait for the right minute and then say the right word.”

“And you won’t mind? You won’t object if I bring your name in the case, and speak out what I feel and what I mean?”

She placed her hand on his shoulder and gazed earnestly into his face.

“No, I won’t object; and I want you to feel that you can draw as heavily upon my poor resources as you wish; that you will make me help you more; that you will do everything to win this case. I want to

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see you show the power that I know is within you. I want you to rise to your own best. Nothing less than that will do. Don't consider trifles. Don't think of my feelings or of anybody else's feelings. You are fighting alone against a small army, and I know that you can win. You can win, Adam, and I want to help you."

He was under her spell, and it seemed to him that she had never been so strong. His mind ran back, and in an instant saw the times when she had saved his weak moments—the night she picked up the book and made him learn the chapter; the day she had shown her sincerity in speaking of the higher things; the innumerable kindnesses.

"It is of no use for me to try to tell you," he said. "Words cannot do it; you can never know how good you have been to me."

He felt like taking her hand and kissing it in gratitude, like kissing her marble forehead; but that passed and a feeling of worship came.

"I must say, however, I don't think you have toted quite fair." Toted was a word which Adam had brought from Wheatley and she had heard him use it.

"I don't understand," he said.

"I have taken so much interest in your work, and you have taken so little in mine."

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She paused, and Adam felt that she was right. He had been selfish.

"I would not say that if I did not have a purpose. You and father fail in this case to grasp the real, the big, the changeless point."

"We are not broad enough?" he asked.

"You are broad enough in the law, but you do not look high enough in the right. If Mr. Bradson has bought men's consciences, he has debased manhood and violated homes. If he has done this he has offended against God. What I should like to see would be for you and father to show a stronger sentiment for the righteousness of the case than for its law."

"Bradson has certainly done the devil's work," said Adam.

"Now you are getting the clearer idea."

"But possibly after awhile you would want to show him mercy."

"So I might, but I would convict him first," she replied, with decision. She paused, and then added: "With father there is an intellectual balance which he calls philosophy. I do not dispute its value, and I admire his great gifts of mind, but somehow it does not satisfy my ideals. With me everything points to God. I believe in a God who looks down and scans

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our purposes and our actions. And I believe that in everything we do He expects us to do service for Him. You said just now that Mr. Bradson had done the devil's work. So he has. Now you must do God's work. You must look to Him in every word you say, in every move you make. Oh, my friend, believe me, there is no help like that. Somehow I know that what I have said, that what I feel, will come to you. It must come before you are through with this case, and when it does come all the lawyers on earth cannot hurt or halt you."

She slipped down from the big log.

"You must realize," he said, "that I appreciate all you have said. There is something beyond even the best philosophy, and I pray that it will come to me as strongly as it has to you. Things are in such a jungle now that they seem to shut out this higher light, but as we cut our way through the wilderness I believe we shall reach clear ground."

"I am sure of it," she said.

They did not say much as they walked homeward. She passed into the house, and Adam got some papers from the office and crossed the street to his room.

It was a little after ten, and he found Major Scott, somewhat the worse for wear, waiting for him.

ADAM RUSH

"I wanted to talk with you," he said; "and, by the way, there's a note for you."

Adam saw the handwriting and tore open the envelope eagerly. He read:

"Please come to see me just as soon as you receive this.

"HONORA WEATHERBY."

"I haven't time to talk with you now, major, for I am going out for an hour or so. But don't drink any more to-night. Please don't."

"All right, my boy. All right."

Hona opened the door for him. She did not smile when she said, "Good-evening, Adam." Her face still had all its beauty, and something of maturity added, but there was a cloud over it. When they went into the parlor she closed the door.

"Adam," she said, "they kept this terrible thing from me, and I only knew of it by happening to pick up a newspaper. Nobody will give me any satisfaction. Is this statement true?"

She handed him a clipping, a dispatch from Chester telling about the trial:

"All sorts of rumors are flying around. The Bradsons keep up their remarkable confidence, and say a complete acquittal must result in a day or two. Some of their spokesmen

ADAM RUSH

go so far as to assert that the judge may take the case from the jury. One rumor is to the effect that Bradson has receipts for all moneys signed by Potter Wetherby. Weatherby, it will be remembered, was in the Legislature, and was a friend of the bill by which the loan was submitted to the voters. Whether or not Bradson is going to dump the whole blame—if there be any—upon Weatherby may appear in the further proceedings."

"Is it true?" she asked again, feverishly.

"Hona, I know nothing of it—nothing at all."

"But you are trying the case against Mr. Bradson? You are trying to send him to jail, aren't you?"

"It is a case in which I represent the State—the people—Hona."

"Oh, don't say it in that way. Tell me so that I can understand it."

"Well, then, if I win the case Mr. Bradson may have to go to jail; that is, of course, if the higher courts do not interfere."

"I don't want to know that. My brain is in such a whirl that it cannot take it in. If Mr. Bradson goes to jail, you will send him there?"

Adam started to explain that the court would do that, but she interrupted him again.

"Well, yes," he admitted, finally.

"And if my father were in Mr. Bradson's place, it would be you who would send him to jail?"

ADAM RUSH

"Hona, I can't answer such a question as that. Your father is not on trial."

"But if he were—if these people should put all the blame on him—then would you send him to jail?"

Adam tried to laugh and tell her that she was borrowing trouble, and imagining things that did not exist, but she cut him short.

"I don't want you to laugh," she said. "You have no right to laugh when my heart is so heavy. I love my father. He has been good to me. And I thought you were still my friend—that you could not forget the old days—and now you would send him to jail."

He arose and started towards her. She waved him back. "No, don't come near me. Stay where you are."

He sat down and rested his chin on his hand, while she sobbed.

"You can go now," she said.

He did not move. "I am going to stay until I can talk with you," he declared.

Her sobbing passed and she looked up.

"What do you know about your father's part in this except what you have read in this newspaper?"

ADAM RUSH

"Only that, and he told me not to worry, that he he was all right—but he isn't."

"Is he home?"

"Yes."

"Then ask him to come down."

She obeyed reluctantly. Mr. Weatherby entered with some of his old-time air, but there was a show of dejection beneath it which was unescapable.

Adam went over the conversation that had just passed between Hona and himself, and showed Mr. Weatherby the clipping; then adding, "Now, Mr. Weatherby you are not on trial, and I doubt that you will even be called as a witness, and I think it is only right that you should tell Hona the exact truth and either relieve her of these fears or permit her to help you. For my part I have more faith in the aid of a good woman than in the advice of a good lawyer. Of course, I do not wish to stay to hear what you have to say."

"But I want you to," exclaimed Weatherby, eagerly. "I've been wanting to tell for days, and I did intend to go down to see your father, but I knew what they would be saying if I tried to leave town, as I did before."

"You must stay," declared Hona, when Adam arose, and he sat down.

ADAM RUSH

"I'll give you the whole story," said Weatherby. "I had been employed by Bradson ever since before I went to the Legislature. He asked me if I favored the railroad, and I said I did. Then said he, 'I want you to help me, and I'll pay you for your work.' I accepted his terms. A few days afterwards your father, Colonel Rush, took me aside. Do you know anything about your father and Bradson ever having been mixed up in a quarrel?"

"I never heard even a suggestion of such a thing," said Adam.

"Well, I don't know what it was, but it was something long before the Wheatley days. Anyhow, Colonel Rush asked me if I was not doing work for Bradson, and I told him I was. Then he said I had done some favors for him, and he wanted to show his appreciation by doing me a service. He told me that if I wanted to take Bradson's money he could not help it, but if I did take it I must look out for traps. He told me never to sign any receipts, never to sign any paper of any kind, never to have any dealings with Bradson without leaving a way open to get out if things got too pressing, or, to make a long story short, to keep my eyes skinned, and that's what I've done. They haven't a scrap to their name to show against me."

ADAM RUSH

"May I ask a question—one that you need not answer unless you want to?"

"Certainly. I want you to ask as many as you please?"

"Did you give anybody money to vote for anything? I mean can they show that you bought any votes?"

"Not a single one. Your father warned me on that, too. So I always told Bradson that it wouldn't do for me to pay out any of his money; that if he wanted that done he must get others to do it. I did give and lend some small sums, but voting was never mentioned, and in the cases where the men came to me about their votes I told them they were at liberty to vote as they pleased. And they will testify to that fact if need be."

"But, papa, you took money from Mr. Bradson. What did you do with that?"

"Well, some I returned when I resigned, and some of the rest is put away," said Mr. Weatherby, with a quiet smile. "Now you have the whole story, and the only reason I've been worrying is from all this talk, and, most of all, because I didn't think Nora would understand it. Now you've got the whole story, and I'm glad I told it. They can't touch me, and if they try any forgery about receipts,

ADAM RUSH

Bradson will go to the penitentiary so quick that he won't know himself."

Adam thought of Silas Wright's tribute to Weatherby as "the slickest of the lot," but he did not repeat it.

Pot Weatherby seemed lighter of heart when he left the room.

"Do you feel better now?" asked Adam of Hona.

"Better, but not satisfied," she replied. "If I ask you a question will you give me an honest answer?"

"Hona, you have asked so many I could not answer to-night, that I shall have to know it first."

"Has my father stolen anything?"

"No."

"Has he——"

"Now, not another one," he exclaimed, arising and going towards her and putting his hand over her mouth. "It's my turn now. Answer me this: what are you going to do?"

"Work, work, work," she replied; "work so as to never touch another Bradson dollar."

"But, my dear Hona, what can you do?"

"There's plenty of work in the world," she said, "and I shall find something." And she arose and stood fronting him. "I am strong, I am determined, and I'll do it. It was the disgrace I feared—feared

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even worse than the gossip that drove me away from this horrid place. Oh, Adam! Adam!"

She held out her arms and he caught them. Then he let her have her cry, stroking her hair and kissing her upon the forehead. She trembled within his embrace, and seemed rested there, until suddenly she placed her hands against his shoulders and shoved him from her.

"I said I was strong," she exclaimed, amid her tears, "and see how weak I am! Good-night, Adam. You have your work to do, and I must not take too much of your time. Good-night, and thank you for coming to me."

"I shall always come to you, Hona."

"Good-night," she repeated. "You really must go. It is late, and if you do not get your proper sleep you will not be yourself to-morrow. Good-night, and thank you—thank you—thank you, Adam, thank——" And, sobbing, she ran up the stairs.

It was near midnight, and there was a loneliness outside which suited him. The thoughts of the day and night rioted through his mind. After a while he laughed a little to himself, and said, "Surely there can be nothing more until morning."

But there was. When Adam reached his office he turned up the lamp and began to look over some of

ADAM RUSH

the papers. He did not feel quite ready to go to sleep. Suddenly the quiet was disturbed. He heard steps. They sounded unusually loud because they made the only noise stirring. A minute later he looked up, and before him stood Paul Bradson, very serious and paler than usual.

"Rush," he said, "I'm on plain business, and I'll speak to the point at once."

Adam nodded affirmatively, and said, "Go ahead."

"You're determined to push this thing at any cost—you showed that to-day."

"Of course."

"I come here as man to man on my own responsibility. No one knows of this visit but myself. There is no use to juggle with facts. Money was used and people were bought because money had to be used and votes had to be got. It was urgency; it had to be done that way or not at all. But it is not the first time such things have been done in politics, and it won't be the last. People understand that, and, in fact, they rather expect it. Such cases have come to the courts without anybody getting hurt; a little fuss and feathers, and then the whole thing was forgotten. But if you push this through you may not only kill the road, but you will stain the characters of those behind it—the men who looked

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upon the whole affair purely as a business proposition. And that we won't have. Now, before I say something I'd prefer not to say, I want to ask you if you intend to carry out in dead earnest the programme you outlined to-day?"

"Your question answers itself—*Yes.*"

"Well, I want to warn you that if you do we are prepared to strike you through your family, and to strike hard."

Adam knitted his brows and looked keenly at Bradson to see if he had been drinking, but when he saw that he was sober, he said, calmly, "Go on."

"In the Mexican War your father shot a fellow-soldier, who had time before his death to write a letter giving the facts and naming his slayer. This letter was committed to a friend, who put it with his other belongings in a satchel, which was sent to his relatives here in Washington County."

"In this county?"

"Yes, in this county. We know the man who forwarded the package, and he is in call to-day. On his information we made a search, and the letter was found in a side-pocket of the old satchel, where it had never been disturbed since it was placed there in Mexico over thirty years ago. I have the letter in my office and there can be no question as to its

ADAM RUSH

genuineness. I will bring it to you in one hour. It is now twelve, and I don't ask your answer until one, for I want you to think it over and be prepared to decide upon what you intend to do, remembering, let me assure you, that if you insist upon proving my father a briber, I shall not hesitate to accuse your father of a graver crime."

Adam's impulse was to kick him down-stairs, but, in addition to his reluctance to get into a broil at that critical time, his common sense told him to take full advantage of the hour.

He turned down the lamp, put his feet on the table, and tried to get the matter in order, for it had come so suddenly that he was in a whirl. He had a way of throwing his hands back of his head and gazing at the ceiling, and he was in this attitude when he heard another noise. Looking up, he saw Major Scott coming from the little room and rubbing his red and watery eyes.

"Well, son, what time is it—day or night, morning or afternoon?"

Adam's manner showed annoyance. "It's almost midnight."

"Just time enough left for another drink, eh?"

Adam arose and stood in his way. "Major, for God's sake don't go to that bar-room again to-night.

ADAM RUSH

There's trouble enough now, and you promised to keep straight and help me out."

"Must have that last drink, my boy. Must have it. I'll be all right to-morrow—promise you I will."

Adam had stood about as much as one day could hold, more than a single night should possess, and he turned his back and threw himself in the chair, exclaiming, "What's the use, what's the use?"

And yet there was still more to come. The night had not ended.

XXIV

A BONFIRE IN BRADSON'S OFFICE

BRADSON'S office was half-way down the square, in a building devoted entirely to business, and he returned to it at once, hurrying as if danger lurked in the quiet of the street. He had sat at his desk only a few minutes when he heard steps coming from the direction of Rush's place, and he at once concluded that it was Adam.

But Major Wilberforce Scott opened the door, and, before Paul could give expression to his surprise, turned, locked it, and put the key in his pocket.

"What does this mean?" Paul demanded.

"I overheard your conversation a few minutes ago," said the major, calmly.

"What conversation?"

"I was there—in the other room, lying upon the sofa. Adam either thought I was asleep or had forgotten I was anywhere near."

"And you come from him?"

"Yes, from his office, but not with his knowledge.

ADAM RUSH

I am here on my own responsibility, and I am here to call your bluff."

"My bluff?"

"Yes, your bluff. You know that you have no such letter. You cannot produce it."

"Then you call me a liar?"

"Choose your own terms, I am not particular."

"In my office——" His tone was rising.

"Not so loud," whispered the major, moving between Paul and the window, "I am talking with you now, and I tell you that I've come to call your bluff."

"There is no bluff," insisted Paul. "I have the letter."

"Then let me see it."

Paul laughed, a hard, forced, nervous laugh.

"I did not come here to parry. Let me see that letter, or go with me and tell Adam in my presence that it does not exist."

"But it does exist."

"And you have it here?"

"I have it here."

"Then give it to me."

Paul was becoming frightened by the major's savage earnestness, but he shook his head.

"Give it to me, I tell you, or I'll kill you as I did——"

ADAM RUSH

"As you did whom?"

"The man who wrote it."

"You?"

"Yes, I; and never did a scoundrel better deserve it."

"I refuse."

The trembling words were scarcely from his lips before the major was upon him, with his iron grip around his throat.

"Once more, if you want to live, will you give me that letter?"

"Let go—for God's sake, let go!"

The major eased a bit and allowed him time for compliance, but between the fright and the choking Paul's speech was demoralized. He pointed to the safe, which was unlocked.

The major dragged him along and held him firmly while he found the yellow envelope and made sure that it was the one.

He kept his grip upon Paul as he hastily read the letter. Then he threw it into the open grate and watched it reduced to ashes.

"Adam will be expecting you," the major said, with full voice, "and I should like you to go at once."

Paul demurred. Major Scott was adamant. "You

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will go," he said, "and I will go to the steps with you and see that you keep your engagement with him."

They went down the stairs without speaking, and Paul, under the spell of the major's influence, or from fear of him, made his miserable way to Adam's office.

Adam looked up as he entered, and noticed the white face and the crumpled collar.

"Have you brought the letter?" he asked.

"I came to tell you there is no letter. Good-night," and before Adam could recover from his astonishment Paul had turned and almost run down the steps.

When Paul had disappeared, Major Scott ascended the stairs.

"What! You here again?" asked Adam.

"Yes, I came to put you to bed, and I don't want you to be sitting under a light at this time of night near a window. You are dealing with a crowd that will stop at nothing. I don't think they want to kill you, but they would not object to having you laid up for a month or so. The bluff of young Bradson to-night was a mild sample of what we may expect if we are not careful."

"What do you know about it?"

ADAM RUSH

"I heard him make it, and I followed him to his office and called it."

"Then all that story of his is——"

"Bosh, pure bosh. They haven't any more evidence against your father than they have against me. They were trying to frighten you—that's all. Now get to bed and lock yourself up before I go."

But the night was not ended.

XXV

A REMARKABLE DUEL AND AN EMPTY BOTTLE

WHEN Major Scott left Adam Rush's office he hastened to the livery stable and awoke Ben, the hostler and driver, who slept in the hayloft. In low tones he ordered two horses and a comfortable carriage, and added, "Ben, I want you to drive me to Wheatley and to let the team go for all it is worth. Keep your eyes open and remember that there is an extra dollar for you if you make it in less than three hours."

The carriage was soon ready, and Major Scott climbed in and made himself comfortable. The horses threw off their somnolency and sped at a ten-mile gait over the good roads that led from Chester. Then after awhile Major Scott began to see and hear in the voiceless darkness things of the past with all the reality of yesterday.

He saw the dozen eager and light-spirited lads setting off to war from Washington County. He saw Adam Rush and Wilberforce Scott side by side, and comrades through all the months of toil and fight;

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friends closer than brothers, each in love with the same sweet girl and each keeping the secret from the other; good soldiers who won promotions by efficiency and gallantry, and who, being more intelligent than the average, put two and two together in the game of war.

He saw the same Rush and Scott standing under a tree and exchanging their suspicions about Bradson and Jetters, and afterwards catching the same Bradson and Jetters stealing from the government and putting false returns into the commissary accounts; then confronting them with the proofs and refusing to sell their silence.

He saw the camp-fire and the dozen and more soldiers sitting around, and Jetters in his cups because of his fear of the disclosures that might come at any moment; and he heard Jetters grow more glib of tongue, and in his bravado begin to mention the sweethearts he had left at home, and, with an insinuation that could not be wiped away by a life of apology, pronounce the full name of the young woman whose face was ever in the hearts of two true men.

He saw Adam Rush and Wilberforce Scott withdraw together and walk into the darkness, and he heard again this conversation:

ADAM RUSH

"I am going to kill him," said Rush.

"No," declared Scott, "I shall do it."

And they almost came to blows before they agreed that they would do it together. But how?

"Scoundrel that he is, I cannot shoot him down like an assassin," said Rush.

"It's against the grain to show him any consideration," said Scott; "but you are right."

"We'll fight him together, or he can take me first and then——"

"There you are again. He'll take me first——"

"We'll give him a choice."

Jetters was told the next morning. He turned very white, but there was a certain recklessness about him that kept him from being an entire coward.

"We are going to kill you," said Rush, "and we give you a slight chance only for decency's sake."

"We will kill you, or you will kill both of us," said Scott.

"When?" asked Jetters.

"To-day."

He saw the hour fixed, and then as dusk came on the three men together, well-hid in the tropical forest, and he heard Jetters say:

"I have thought it out, and I propose that I fight

ADAM RUSH

you both at once, I standing in the centre and each of you thirty paces from me, all in a straight line, I to have two pistols and time to aim, and either of you, as you chose, to give the signal."

He saw the line, Scott to the right and Rush to the left of Jetters, and he heard Rush count "One—two—three—fire!"

And as he heard the four reports, he saw Jetters begin to step from the line, then stagger and fall the other way; and he saw Rush and Scott hurry to the man and find, to their astonishment, that both balls had hit.

And through the air he heard the summons for an advance, and he saw Rush and Scott leave the fallen soldier and run for their camp, and in a few minutes he saw the company marching on urgent orders.

He remembered dimly a fight, but at the end of it he saw Bradson approach and beckon them away from their comrades, and he heard him tell them that Jetters had lived long enough to write a letter home, and that he had named them as his slayers, and had given the name of the young woman—but that all this would amount to nothing unless corroborated by himself, and that corroboration would never come if Rush and Scott would keep to themselves what they knew about the commissary supplies.

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And then came the end of the war, with Rush hurrying home and marrying Lucy Dean, and Scott coming later and keeping his love to himself, and both friends meeting and agreeing that they would guard their secret apart and come to each other again only for direst need or when the cloud on their lives had been lifted—not that they cared for the killing of the man, but that they dreaded her name ever to appear in connection with it. It all seemed fantasy, but such was the truth, and such it had remained through the years.

Then Major Scott's visions faded into dreams, and he did not come back to wakefulness until Ben stopped the horses and got down to open the gate through which the lane led to Adam Rush's house.

When the two men met they clasped hands and did not speak, but looked each other straight in the eyes.

"Is it Adam?" asked Colonel Rush, breaking the silence.

"Yes," beamed the major, "Adam and all the rest of us." And he placed his arm around the shoulder of his old comrade, and added, "The news is so good that I'm almost afraid to believe it myself—even if I did see the letter burned to ashes."

ADAM RUSH

"Burned," exclaimed the colonel, with jubilant surprise.

"Burned."

They went to the dining-room, where a smouldering fire made the early morning air less chilly, and Major Scott told the whole story of the night's happenings, ending, "I couldn't stop a single minute. I just had to get to you as quickly as I could."

"I have never regretted that I killed the cur," said Colonel Rush.

"You killed him? What are you talking about? It was my shot that did it."

"I deny it."

"Deny it until you are petrified—all the same I killed him."

And then the old quarrel broke forth in a new form, and peace was only brought when each reluctantly agreed to say, "We killed him."

They were safe now. All that Bradson could say would avail nothing, and most blessed of all was the certainty that her name could never be connected with Jetters or with scandal.

With the clouds of the past rolled away, the two old soldiers began to think and talk of the present. They admitted their failings and excused themselves partly by the claim that nothing but alcohol could

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drown even temporarily the haunting fear, and as they spoke they were emptying the bottle that Ephraim brought up from the cellar the night Adam, Jr., was born.

It was getting along towards sunrise, when the colonel remarked, "There are just two drinks left."

"The two that shall be our last," said Major Scott, earnestly.

"What's that?"

"God knows, Adam, we have suffered, and suffered long, but in trying to quiet our own feelings we have poisoned ourselves and made others suffer—suffer more keenly, perhaps, than we ever did, and they have borne their grief with a heroism that we never felt. Now we have no longer any excuse, and we may—we may, I say—be able to put a little sunlight in the corners of hearts that have been dark so long. Not only that, my old friend, but we may hold up the arms of one who has yet to fight his battle with the world. If for nothing else we must stop, so that Adam may not be ashamed of us; so that the devil that is born in him may not conquer. It will be hard, hard, old man, but we'll empty the bottle and then we'll quit. The big cloud has lifted, and it would be treason to God Almighty not to do the best thing we can to show our gratitude."

ADAM RUSH

"You're right, Wilberforce, you're right. And this is our last drink."

"Our last drink," repeated the major, with a solemnity deeper than prayer.

They gazed tenderly at the old bottle and at the glasses, and then, looking at each other, smiled as if bidding good-by in the presence of their joint execution. Colonel Rush inspected the ceiling and breathed a sigh of infinite pathos, and Major Scott inspected the ceiling and breathed a sigh that seemed to be even more infinite.

Colonel Rush reached for the bottle and began to pour Major Scott's portion, and then he emptied the remainder into his own glass.

"No, you don't!" exclaimed the major.

"Don't what?"

"Give me more than you take yourself."

"This is my house."

"That doesn't matter. Hand me those glasses." And he took them and poured from his own until the division seemed equal.

"Neither do you, sir," commanded Colonel Rush. "You have given me more than you have taken." And measuring with one eye shut, he added, "Wait a minute."

He hobbled from the table and went to the mantel-

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piece. He came back with a ruler, saying, "So long as this is to be correct, it is to be correct."

He placed the glasses side by side near the table's edge, and Major Scott joined him.

Together the two old friends knelt and held the ruler along the liquid surfaces of the glasses. Not a word was spoken, but Colonel Rush took his glass and poured a little into the other, and then with eyes half closed they both squinted along the line to see if either had a visible bit of advantage.

It was a sight that could be seen only by those peeping rascals of the other world who sometimes open the little doors of heaven and look down upon earth and watch poor mortals of all ages doing very remarkable things.

For a third time the ruler was applied, and with groans from stiff joints and grunts of satisfaction they arose and reoccupied their chairs. There was more gazing, as if each wanted to postpone the crisis as long as possible. All of life and of hardship and of courage and of resolution that had gone before seemed small in comparison with this supreme decision, and they halted over it, deep in remembrance, deeper still in thoughts of the future; and as they were sitting, with their hands upon the glasses and their heads hung low, soft footsteps caused them to

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look up, and there in the early morning light stood Mrs. Rush.

"Good-morning, Mrs. Rush," exclaimed the major, with sudden spirit.

"Good-morning, Major Scott; so you have not entirely forgotten us plain country folk? I was afraid you had, but I assure you that we are very glad to see you."

"Even at this hour?"

"At any hour."

"I shall try in the future to make up for lost time. And you must permit us to drink your health and happiness—drink our last drink to brighter days."

Mrs. Rush laughed at the two old sinners, with their glasses in hand, a laugh that had a bit of sadness under it, but was none the less sincere and hospitable.

"Our last drink to you, my dear," said her husband.

"Our last drink to you," repeated the major.

Lucy Rush's smile quivered upon her face; a curious look came into her eyes; she stood as if benumbed, and her lips parted as the men drained their glasses and placed them upon the table.

"Our last," said the colonel.

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"Our last," repeated the major.

They extended their hands to her. Hers was trembling.

"You mean it?" she cried. "You mean it? Oh, thank God! Thank God!"

XXVI

ADAM SPEAKS FOR THE PEOPLE

SAMUEL SALT was foreman of the jury. It was the hardest ordeal of his life. To sit hour after hour and hear everybody else talking and not able to say a word was torture. Even worse was the inhibition which prevented him when he was out of court from telling the town the errors of the lawyers.

"A member of the jury," he declared, "is worse than a married man who has troubles at home and whose wife does all the talking. He can't say anything to anybody, and what he hears only adds to his burdens."

The radiant and clever lawyers had fun with Adam. He made mistakes. When Mr. Long corrected, he assumed the fatherly and regretful attitude, or caused the spectators to laugh. Indeed, Mr. Long purposed to handle the case kindly and cheerfully, so as to remove the impression that a deep wrong had been committed. He wanted the jury to feel that Mr. Bradson's offence was one of the little things familiar in American politics. From these gains he

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would build up his defence and show that it had been the fate of great leaders of industry to be misjudged and persecuted, from which it would naturally follow in his argument and his eloquence that Bradson had done more for Washington County than any ten men in its history, and that for all this splendid work he was made the victim of petty prejudices which were not only unjust and unnecessary, but scandalous and contemptible.

Hundreds of streams make the river, manifold strata form the mountain, and they can all be found and counted, but the influences that make and shape the individual life are indistinguishable and innumerable, are as mysterious as existence itself. Adam Rush owed much to his mother's faith. He owed more than he knew to the pure and healthy youth spent with Hona amid the Wheatley hills. He owed large debts to the saving common sense of Samuel Salt. He owed deep obligations to Mr. Crawford's philosophy, which had broadened his views of men and events and enabled him the better to bring facts and conditions into a safer relationship.

But in his work the force that seemed to move him most was the burning zeal of Constance. It had tempered the desire to exhibit cleverness, had subdued his wit, had stopped many a word that might have been

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coin to the merry minting of his adversaries, and had brought his mind to a state of direct, undeviating, unshakable earnestness.

Finally, General Long was caught in the trap of his own exhuberance. His flowery compliments to the feminine touch in the prosecution seemed to hit; but he made the mistake of interpreting the anger in Adam's face for blushes, and one of his sallies brought Adam to his feet.

"I think, your honor," said Adam, slowly, as he looked at the judge and then directly into the eyes of Mr. Long, "that we may easily dispense with these personal references which seem to be the stock in trade of the waxed and perfumed leader of the defence. So far as they seek to make capital of my inexperience, they may be excusable as efforts to shift attention from the issue of this trial, but their meaning as affecting others may not be so clear, and I feel that I am justified in making a word of explanation. It is true I am assisted by counsel who cannot be at this table. One, the honored State's Attorney, is, as you know, prostrated by an illness from which he may never rise, but his mind is not dimmed, and he has done all he could to help the ends of justice. The other is his daughter, who has worked with an earnestness and an intelligence which no appreciation of mine can

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describe, and who in this county stands so high in the esteem of all good men and women that only a person of another section could have the hardihood—I do not say the courage, for that is a noble word—to——”

“I protest against this misrepresentation. I protest,” exclaimed Mr. Long, his face all aflame with anger.

It did Adam good to see the effect of his little speech. The warm blood leaped through him in tingling delight.

“Of course, you protest,” Adam hurled back, taking the word from him. “Of course, you protest. It’s the habit of your breed to protest when caught and brought to bay.” He snapped out the last sentence like the crack of a whip over a dog, and stood fronting his adversary as though prepared for any contingency.

But the judge interfered and told them to proceed with the case. The incident was important, because it gave a different direction to the proceedings. Mr. Long changed his tactics. He was no longer deferential and insinuating; he began to deal hard blows, and this was what Adam most needed. They hammered his metal and sometimes made dents, but the hammering did good.

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Jonas Wright was ever the guardian angel, and a very helpful man in times of trouble, for he knew the case, and his knowledge was at Adam's elbow. Major Scott for several days after his drive to Wheatley was weak and nervous; the absence of his stimulant made it hard for him, but gradually he came up, and each day added to his effectiveness. One of the strange things came to pass; the intellect so long benumbed began to awaken. Major Scott was not the same. He had no quilps. He uttered no jokes. He was deeply, almost deadly serious, and when he realized his own strength, he went for the defence with savage delight.

Then after days came the speech-making, with each doing the best he could, with the court-room jammed, with excitement at the fever point, with everything hanging on the edge.

General Long's speech was masterly and merciless. He dealt blow after blow, cutting deeper and deeper, and making such an impression that Mr. Bradson and his supporters felt a confidence that made them jubilant. Young Rush, they said, could never counteract the effect of such genius. The jury could do nothing but render the full request of the defence—a complete acquittal—and as the audience, seemingly all of one mind, looked at the jury, there was

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little doubt that this would be done. Even Jonas Wright began to think that the day was lost. Major Scott gritted his teeth, and whispered to Adam, "Don't try any fireworks, my boy, but just give 'em plain hell."

Adam was pale and nervous. A mere youth in comparison with the veterans who opposed him, he never before felt his lack of experience as he did then. He was starting forth on a little-known sea, and the only force that propelled him was the knowledge that he was right and that he was not afraid. So, if he sometimes lost his sentences, or if a little flight had a sophomoric ending, or if he had to pause to gather his argument, or if he made a striking contrast to the distinguished man who had preceded him, the gathering in the court-room felt the reality and power of his earnestness.

"You have just heard," he said, quietly and slowly, "one of the most remarkable performances of oratory ever delivered in this State. I wondered as I listened to it why the gentleman did not use the same gifts as vigorously in the prosecution of criminals while he was the Attorney-General as he has since in the defence of criminals who are rich enough to pay his fees."

This blow struck home, for Long had been derelict

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in office and notoriously rapacious when he got out of office and became a criminal lawyer.

"But," continued the young speaker, "with his words still ringing in your ears and still fresh in your memories, I call you to witness if he uttered a single sentence for justice or for honesty or for manhood. His flights swept through all the stars and called down the mercies of heaven upon the man who needs them, but they did not seek to restore a single atom of self-respect to the poor people of this county who were first corrupted and then robbed. According to his showing, we should apologize to Bradson because he is a thief wearing good clothes."

Mr. Long had been magnificent and opulent in his sentences, and had lifted his crowd from their ordinary thoughts and surroundings. Adam had them in plain dress.

"Now," he said, "the other day another man stood where Bradson stands. He had been an honest, hard-working person. Bradson's money came along, and he took some of it. After that he had no sense of shame to protect him, and so he drifted from bad to worse until he stole a pair of shoes. He was caught. His guilt was proved. The judge has sent him to jail. He did not have fine clothes and a small army of lawyers to defend

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him. Do you mean to tell me that this well-dressed thief who robbed a whole county is better than the poor weakling whom he—I say he, Bradson—has ruined? No. Instead of counting for Bradson, all this show and paid eloquence, all this manifest expenditure of money, all this effort, should prove to you that he is so guilty that he will spend every dollar of his ill-gotten wealth to get out of the clutches of the law."

Bradson winced a little, and the people began to turn their heads and say things to one another.

"There is one thing I want to say right here," Adam continued, more in a conversational tone, "and perhaps I ought not to say it; but it is very sharp in my mind and feeling, and I won't be comfortable until I get it out. The leader of the defence and his brilliant followers have taken occasion to get some fun out of the inexperience of the one who addresses you, and to refer many times to his youth and to what they have been pleased to term his devouring zeal. They say he may get to know better when he learns more of the world and of the ways of politics. Gentlemen," he exclaimed, so that the people craned their necks to get a better view, "I would rather be the weak thief who sits friendless in the prison over there than the hypocritical scoundrel who is on trial

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here to-day, and I would rather be where he is than be a defender of Bradson's rascality. Oh, I know you may raise the point of professional duty and all that sort of thing, which has been contemptible ever since the practice of law began, and will be even more contemptible in the future, but the fact is, you have hired yourselves to this thief, and instead of your own scruples you have his fees. It is pitiful, oh, so pitiful, to see all these gifted men defending to the utmost a crime against the people, leaving only the weaker ones to ask for justice.

"But justice will be done. You may hire all the lawyers in the world; you may influence every man on the jury; you may bribe the officers of the law; you may bribe the court itself; but at some time, in some way, justice will be done. Nothing that we may say here, nothing that we do here, can change the law of God."

General Long had sailed the sea like a grayhound, with colors flying; Adam was plunging through the pack like an ice-boat. The curiosity of the spectators had turned into intense interest. They had expected the young man to say a few high-flown things and then retire; but they did not know him. Constance felt a thrill of satisfaction when she heard him refer to the higher law.

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“An election under free government is the machinery by which the voice of the people is spoken in their affairs,” he said, deliberately, “and this voice, unless changed by baseness, is called the voice of God. The defence did not, because they could not, deny that money had been paid for votes. They did not, because they could not, try to show that the money was not furnished by the railroad corporation. They tried hard enough, but they utterly failed, to prove that Bradson did not have anything to do with the handling of this fund for wholesale corruption. Then they shifted to the meanest position that honorable men could take for a dishonorable act, and sought to tell you that if morals stood in the way of what they call progress, the rules of God must be suspended until they got their hands in the people’s pockets and took all the money they could get.”

His speech began to tell.

“The man who holds that wrong must be done in order that good may come is worse than a breaker of the law,” he exclaimed. “He is an enemy of the moral law; he is an athiest who sets defiance to God, and by the wickedest premeditation plunders and debases his fellow-men. All is fair in war and politics, they say. What a miserable lie! It is no use to bother after the election is over, they tell us. No

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use to trace the slimy path of their corruption, which stretches from the polluted ballot-box into the homes and poisons the morals of the family, and by degrees gathers in its coils good but weak victims and brings them to the grave or the jails. No use to bother about the purity and the safety of the institution which has been sanctified by the blood of our fathers and consecrated by the conscience of a free people. No use to defend virtue. No use to prosecute crime.

“And so they build their weak pretences and falsehoods, and place upon it the statue of—Bradson.”

He brought this out slowly and explosively. Mr. Bradson glared. Paul clinched his fists.

“Bradson!” he repeated. “Bradson, who gives a church in order that he may rob its worshippers at the polls. Bradson, who invades a peaceful and happy country and trebles its crime within five years, without missing a Sunday service or neglecting the contribution plate. Bradson, who deliberately commits crime against a whole county—not a petty criminal mind you, not a mere thief, but an adept and broad-souled scoundrel, who does the devil’s work in the devil’s own way. It is evidence against this man you are to consider; it is this man you must convict; for if ever a criminal was guilty, there he sits.”

Adam had impressed the audience and the jury;

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they were following each word uttered by the young man, who seemed to fear no one. Then at some length he went over the testimony again, doing it very earnestly, and pointing time and again to Bradson, until the man had become nervous and miserable. The shadows grew longer as Adam neared the close of his speech.

"You must know, gentlemen of the jury, that there can be no escape for the accused from these incriminations. He is walled around by guilt. His small army of defenders have sought to show everything but his innocence. They have pleaded for him on the ground that he stands so high. But why did he fall so low? In your own hearts you feel that he deserves the punishment that the law may give him, but——"

Here Adam paused and raised his finger and stepped nearer to the jury-box.

"But if, through any influence, however weak or strong, or from whatever source it may come, you acquit this man, upon yourselves will fall the judgment of righteous wrath, the wrath of man as well as the wrath of God.

"If you are engaged in business and vote to acquit him, never again object to a thief entering your store and stealing your goods.

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"If you have sons whom you wish to grow into noble manhood, never again—if you acquit this man—look them in the face.

"If you have families whom you love, never again utter one word if dishonor crosses your threshold—never again, if you acquit this man.

"If you acquit him, gentlemen of the jury, take your ways, but let those ways lead from Washington County, which this man has wronged so bitterly that his punishment would be poor atonement for the evil he has done.

"Now, gentlemen, leaving the case in your hands, I do not believe, I cannot believe, that you can acquit the accused. I feel in my soul that you will vote for the right, will hold to the right, and will let nothing shake you; but if there should be a Judas among your twelve, only God can tell what may befall him."

His concluding reference to a Judas seemed out of place to many, but to the inner circle it was understood. To a few it was more than a suspicion, for Bradson, who had bought a county, would not stop at buying a jury.

There was a great buzz in the court-room when Adam concluded, and the proceedings that followed were constantly interrupted by calls for order, but

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finally the jury received its instructions and was placed in the care of the sheriff.

People waited with feverish impatience; crowds stood on the corners, the hotel bar-room was filled, and more than two hundred still waited in the courthouse. Time went by, and at ten o'clock at night the jurors filed in.

Adam Salt, the foreman, reported to the judge that they were unable to agree. The judge asked the usual questions and ordered them locked up for the night.

XXVII

THE VICTORY IN DEFEAT

AFTER the jury retired the second time Adam made his way as quickly as he could to the Crawford home and asked Constance if he might see Mr. Crawford.

"Yes," she said, "he's waiting for you."

He did not stop to listen to the compliments which she had to offer, but hurried up the stairs. He found Mr. Crawford propped up in bed. He was surprised to see upon his face a very sunny and comfortable smile.

"I did the best I could," said Adam, with a sigh, as he settled in a chair, "but I believe we are beaten. It will be either an acquittal or a disagreement."

"It will be a disagreement," said Mr. Crawford, calmly.

Adam looked at him inquiringly. How could he know?

"I congratulate you with all my heart," said Mr. Crawford. "You exceeded all my expectations. You have won your position at the bar. More than that, you have won a magnificent victory."

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"But I have not won the case."

"You have won more than the case," said Mr. Crawford, confidently. "Behind every great enterprise, my friend, there are quiet and conservative men who never step in unless forced to do so by a crisis. You have brought on that crisis so acutely that you have assured the complete reorganization of a great corporation. The man back of it has been in this room this evening. He and I were schoolmates, and he is now a leading capitalist. He was the main figure behind this scheme—a scheme of which the railroad through this county is but a very small part.

"You developed in this case much more than you knew, for to this man you showed that Bradson was trying to rob the company as well as the county in the name of the company. Bradson is safe from the penitentiary, for two of the jurors are bought. 'But,' my friend said, 'I won't stand for this sort of thing, I never have done it, and I never will. I did not know the facts until that young man of yours brought them out. They are horrible.' I asked him what he intended to do. He replied by asking me if I thought you would proceed against the others. I told him I thought you would; that it was your way to stay in a fight to the bitter end. Then he said

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that he had thought out the whole matter, and that he had a plan which might save the road from further trouble and from the unpopularity of the people of Washington County. He would select a new set of directors, throw out Bradson, whom he calls a knave and a fool, and decline the bonds of the county which have not been issued."

"Only fifty thousand of the half-million have been issued," said Adam.

"And they claim that they put fifty thousand dollars into the county for carrying the election. I mentioned this, but he did not enjoy it. He said that giving back the bonds would look like confession. He had a better plan. He would first get his new men, and then publish a statement of the company's real position, disclaiming any intent to take advantage of any county, and expressing a perfect willingness to construct the road with its own resources. This, my boy, is the victory you have won. You will never convict Bradson, for he has too much money, but you have done more than put a rascal in jail—you have rescued the county from bankruptcy and made the ballot-box safe."

Mr. Crawford paused, and then smiled as he continued: "I know very well what you are thinking about—that in accepting the word of this man,

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whom you do not know, you would be doing wrong ; and so you would. But I do not ask you to accept it. Go ahead with your work, and do not let Bradson get the idea that he is out of your clutches. When the things do happen you will find public sentiment different, and the cases will die of themselves. I doubt if Bradson will remain in this vicinity long. And, by the way, I wish you could have heard what my old friend said of your speech. 'Crawford, he said, 'I'd rather throw away every cent I own and be a million in debt than to have that young man say such things of me as he said of Bradson.' Now, that's what I call a compliment."

"I am not satisfied," said Adam. "I want Bradson convicted."

"I fear you lack philosophy, Adam. You must not expect to get everything you want in this world ; you should be only too happy for getting more than you could reasonably expect. Bradson has been punished, and for a season election bribery has been killed. Is not that enough for a young man not yet turned his twenty-fifth year?"

"Mr. Crawford, you know it is not I—it was you and Miss Constance who——"

"Oh, if you are going to talk any such folly as that, I think I'll bid you good-night." And Mr.

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Crawford turned his head. "Come around to-morrow. Constance will let you know when."

"Good-night, Mr. Crawford, and I hope to find you better in the morning."

"One moment, Adam. I shall not be better in the morning, except that it will be one day nearer the end. And I wanted to say just a word about it. I have talked to you much about philosophy—about the power of mind to make its own peace with the world and to establish its own good order. I do not take back anything I have said, but, Adam, as you drift along as I am drifting, the human mind seems too small to grasp the future. We must look through faith, and through faith we may see God. I don't think he is very far away from me now, Adam. It is like some things we try to do. We fight our best for the verdict; we fight our best against death; but in our defeat we find our victory. Good-night, Adam, good-night."

Mr. Crawford passed from philosophy to realization during the night. He was found dead in the morning. Adam was sent for, and he quickly dressed and hastened over.

Constance met him in the hall. She held up her hand to motion him not to speak. "You know the house," she said, "and what should be done. I

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leave it all to you. I cannot—I am not strong enough.”

She hastened up the stairs, and Adam's first act was to send for a physician to attend her. Then came the other work—the undertaker and the rest.

Adam saw Constance once more before the funeral. He had gone upstairs for something, and in the large front room stood two figures. Mr. Weir was holding her with his left arm; her head was upon his shoulder, and his right hand was tenderly stroking her hair and her cheek.

XXVIII

THE WAYS OF LOVE

ADAM RUSH was appointed to succeed Mr. Crawford. The young man's fight had won him a general reputation, and none appreciated it better than the counsel who opposed him, and they congratulated him, even General Long saying:

"Mr. Rush, you are the worst kind of an opponent—the man who means what he says."

Mr. Bradson remained in the city—for Chester had graduated from a town—and tried to face it out. But Paul told him what he knew was only too true. "It's no use, governor. The place is down on us, and I do not see the sense of staying here, when we can go to another city and get more for our money." They went, and, in their sale of effects, Tennie through another bidder came to back to Adam.

Then, after awhile, politics dropped out and rumor played with other things. Adam's appointment to Colonel Crawford's place began to fill Constance Crawford's matrimonial future. In the general expectation an announcement was due at any hour.

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Only the attentions of Reverend Mr. Weir interfered, but the gossips dismissed Weir as too old—at any rate, he was only a preacher, while Adam Rush's light was shining in the sky.

One bold gossip—the usual one in a community—went so far as to ask, “Well, Constance, when will you and Lawyer Rush be a-marrying?”

“Really,” returned Constance, with a smile, “I do not know, and it might not be pleasant for me to ask Mr. Rush.”

The reports came to Hona with all the crosses of certainty, and in many forms. Mrs. Blank knew they were true, because Mrs. Dash had said so, and Mr. Bothbody had it as a fact from the store. Hona locked herself in her room and began to cry. Then looking in the mirror, she grew angry at herself. Tears did not become her. Her pride was aroused. Why should she care? Constance hurt most because Hona had found that her visit had been prompted by Adam's word. As for Adam, well she could not blame him much. She could not blame him at all, in fact. The Crawfords had done so much for him; they had helped him along so handsomely in his practice; Colonel Crawford had given him the chance that made his reputation, and Adam was not the one to forget. At any rate, she would have the friendship

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—"Friendship, bah!" she impulsively exclaimed, as she threw herself upon the bed.

Adam was nearing the point when something had to be done. Constance stood in his view as a wonderfully fine girl, a girl more lovely than beautiful. She would be in sympathy with his work, which was one-half of the success of matrimony. She could keep him easily in the first social rank, and that was another half of matrimonial success. She had ability, tact, charm, and to these she added a distinct personality of her own which was of the elect in life, the aristocrat nurtured in true culture. He thought of these things, but after all and through all the face of Hona shone.

He took up his hat for a walk, and as he passed down the main street he paused at Samuel Salt's store. He went into the private office of the great merchant.

"Heigho!" exclaimed Mr. Salt. "You're the very man I want to see. The crowd was in here just now and discussing you, and—and—well you know what. Most of 'em say Miss Constance, but I told 'em if I was a betting man I'd lay my money on the golden hair."

"Salt," said Adam, slowly, "if you were not such an old man, sitting on the edge of the grave, and the

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worst merchant inside of a ten-mile circle of Chester, I would resent your confounded impudence."

"Oh, my, ain't he gittin' big? Have to be orderin' extra-sized hats for him soon. Whip me? Whip Samuel Salt?" And he expanded himself in a remarkable manner. "You couldn't do it, my boy, you couldn't half do it. Don't you remember the time I came near thrashing old Pringle?"

"Near enough to be safe," said the young man, who recalled the memorable occasion with a laugh.

"Now, seriously, Adam, what I intended when you came in was to exchange secrets. That's Salt's policy, you know—something for something every time; for every hug give her a kiss. I'm going to tell you the biggest secret I ever told to a human man: I'm going to marry the Widow Pringle."

"So old Pringle will get his revenge at last," said Adam.

"Now, young man, that is not fair. You may say Mrs. Pringle is entering the holy bonds earlier than usual, but think of the long time she had to endure that other creature. And he's as dead as he'll ever be, ain't he?"

"He couldn't be much more dead now than when he was alive," said Adam.

The merchant roared. "Best I ever heard," he

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screamed. "Best I ever heard. But don't blame Mrs. Pringle. She made a mistake, that was all—a mistake from which she suffered, but it was not her fault. How the good woman suffered—Holy Moses, how she must have suffered living with that man! Didn't he look ridiculous sitting in that fish-barrel? Honestly, I laugh when I think of it. But, Adam, don't get any false notions. Our engagement has been a real romance. Here was Salt's store a-growing and a-prospering. It had to have a millinery establishment. Next to it was a millinery establishment that needed more capital and livelier methods. We got to talking it over. The conditions confronted us as plain as your nose on your face. And then that big house of mine just back of the store. Lots of room going to waste, and I getting lonesome and lonelier; and all of a sudden sweet love got tangled with the figures, and I kissed her until she couldn't speak."

"Until she couldn't speak?" interrupted Adam. "Samuel, you *are* a wonder. But now I'm going to quit joking, and say to you, as man to man, that I'm glad of it; that as one who has found you true steel and a friend who is a friend in need and in deed, I congratulate you from the bottom of my heart."

The two men were shaking hands and Samuel Salt

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was dragging Adam through the aisle across the store, until Mr. Salt, still tugging, explained, "This is a little arrangement we have had of our own, you know, a passage between the two stores, and I want you to say those same words to the prospective Mrs. Salt."

In another minute he was standing before her, trying to gather his thoughts.

"Mrs. Pringle," he said, "Mr. Salt has just told me a very delightful piece of news. It is usual to give all the congratulations to the man, and certainly in this case Mr. Salt will receive many, but none will be more sincere than mine, not only for the lovely and accomplished lady who will become his bride, but also because he is one of the finest men I have ever known; and I feel somehow as though I were in the contract, for you are going to make him happy, and every time you do that you make me happy."

Adam beat as hasty a retreat as he could.

"It was perfectly heavenly, the way that man spoke—perfectly heavenly." But if we should go on with all Mrs. Pringle, afterwards Mrs. Salt, said, there would be no end to this book.

The smile was still lingering on Adam's face when he rang the door-bell of the Crawford home, but his heart was becoming solemn.

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Constance saw him before the smile faded away.

"You must have heard a good story?" she remarked.

"Yes; Samuel Salt and Mrs. Pringle have just told me of their approaching marriage. He says they got to discussing the combination of their stores, and then love mixed the figures, and he kissed and kissed her until she couldn't say a word. What do you think of that for heroism?"

Constance laughed, and said it was the first time she had ever known Mrs. Pringle could stop or be made to stop. Mr. Salt was, indeed, a hero. Adam said something in appreciation of Mr. Salt, and the conversation drifted for a little, when he bent over with his hands clasped and his elbows on his knees.

"Constance, I've been wanting to say something—a particular something—to you for a week or more, but every time I started to do it the task and my weakness seemed to grow. Even now I think I shall make a muss of it. There are appreciations within us that are so deep, so fine, and so intimate that we simply cannot put them into words. They belong to that inner self which has no dictionary. But it happened some years ago that a boy came to your house to live; he came with fear and trembling; came not

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exactly a menial, but would be at best something less than the first; that he would live in the house without ever feeling that he belonged there. You, from whom he had no right to expect anything, showered upon him all the blessings, until he felt in his soul that he was your brother. There was another thing. He had an untrained mind, that did not know how to study. He never knew how deep his own ignorance was. He never realized that if he won he must do it by sheer work and earnestness. And so at the crisis, when all his hopes were gone, and when he had determined to slip away in the night and go back home, you placed that single chapter before him, and he studied until daylight, studied until he could repeat it word for word. You gave him more pride in himself, and he counts it nothing to his own credit that he did not sow many wild oats; for how could he, and then look you in the face? In all the days and weeks of companionship there came to him a constant uplifting. He felt your influence as if it were divine, and he often believed it was. He tried once or twice to thank you for it, and he does so now with words so weak that they seem like prattle when they should be prayers. Constance, oh, Constance, how good you have been!"

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Tears blinded him. She was gently weeping.

"It is of no use for me to try to say what I think of you, Adam. If you felt as a brother, I felt more strongly as a sister. I——"

Just at this moment a big man jostled in as though he owned the house. It was the Rev. Mr. Weir.

"Hello!" he exclaimed. "What are you crying about on such a day as this?" Then he gasped, "Oh, I beg your pardon. I forgot it was the first anniversary of Colonel Crawford's death."

"He was a noble man," said Adam. And thus the conversation was turned, and in a short time Adam left.

Adam was busy at the office the rest of the afternoon, and after supper he returned to it again, but at about eight o'clock he went for a walk. His melancholy had gone. It would be a matter of ease and happiness. Then suddenly a few doubts got into his mind. A case is never safe until it's won. The fact that he had done many things for Hona did not say that she would marry him. Other young people had known one another all their lives, and had married persons they had known only a part of their lives. And as Adam studied the case of the opposition the situation became grave. Suddenly he stopped.

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"Adam Rush, you're a blind fool," and he offered to wager impossible amounts against himself that Hona was beyond his reach. With equal suddenness he started for the Weatherby home.

He had never seen Hona look more beautiful. From one of those impulses which belong to her sex she had dressed herself radiantly for the evening. She had no cause for it. She just felt like doing it. Perhaps some one might call. Perhaps not. Anyhow, she would have the joy of feeling on good terms with the world, even though she believed Adam Rush was engaged.

Her height was right; her figure had no excesses; her bosom heaved gently; in her face was the old familiar wild rose, and her hair was that wonderful glow of gold and bronze which is the despair of the artists and the triumph of the skies.

"Hona," said Adam, "I want you for the whole evening. Give the orders that you are not at home. I have many things to tell you, including the news of an engagement."

Hona gave the orders.

"Hona, upon my soul, I never saw you looking lovelier than you do to-night—like a queen in a court of love."

"Now, don't you know," she replied, "I rather

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expected that. I dressed up in the hope that some young man might call and say something that would be complimentary. Like compliments? Of course I do. They are the caromels of life, and one good one fills a five-pound box."

"I said you looked like a queen in a court of love, and now I want you to tell me something. Does a woman love a man because they have known each other long and become close friends?"

"Certainly not." Her sharp reply almost brought him to his feet.

"And she may love a man she has seen only a month or a week or a day?"

"Say an hour," she replied.

"You really mean that a person can break the ties of years and marry one who is comparatively a stranger?"

"They do it constantly. We cannot account for it. So far as I can see, love is something we know nothing about. It happens to one like any other natural and unexpected thing, like dying and going to heaven, I suppose."

He pondered. Hona, whom he had known and loved for years may have seen the man of the hour—and accepted him. But he was not certain.

"It seems to me," he said, "that love is far

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different from friendship, and that both are divine; but while you can regulate friendship, love is beyond your power."

She pondered. Adam had spoken to Constance and had been accepted, and now he was trying to make it easy between him and herself.

He misconstrued her silence, and went on as if to argue his case. "It is hard to understand," he said, "but probably there are two kinds of lovers. The first love and know they love. To them the whisper of the loved one is sweeter music than the song-bird's note. Those of the second class love and are loved, and know nothing of love. They are as dew-drops in the spring shower, or as the rose in the midst of flowers."

"Love came in your law studies, then. Did Constance teach you?"

"Law could no more command love than it could catch rainbows," he declared. "Love has no textbook. There is nothing to guide one to it or away from it except destiny. It makes no calculations, and you can no more state it in words than you can describe the sunset or the voice of the lark."

She thought that Adam was going a bit too far. She could stand good, old-fashioned friendship, but this was rather too much. So she suddenly arose,

ADAM RUSH

and with the most composed smile she could command, asked :

“ When are you to be married, Adam ?”

“ Any time you say,” he answered, jumping to his feet.

“ But Constance would not——”

“ Constance !” he exclaimed, staring blankly at her.

She was gulping down large lumps in her throat. Her hands were holding her brows. She was crying, and suddenly she broke out :

“ You didn’t mean me ?”

Adam took her firmly in his arms and kissed the tears from her eyes. “ Who else could I mean, my love ? Don’t you remember the day we barefoots walked along the stream ; the day we built our little home in the woods ; the sweet hours we played keeping house there ; the long rides over the hills ; the chases and the races ; and then, after all that, the life in this town with its care and its happiness ? Tell me, who else could I mean ?”

A moment of silence went by, and then she held up her radiant face to his.

“ Hona !”

“ Adam.”

THE END



1. The first part of the document is a list of names and addresses of the members of the committee.

2. The second part of the document is a list of names and addresses of the members of the committee.

3. The third part of the document is a list of names and addresses of the members of the committee.

4. The fourth part of the document is a list of names and addresses of the members of the committee.

5. The fifth part of the document is a list of names and addresses of the members of the committee.



